

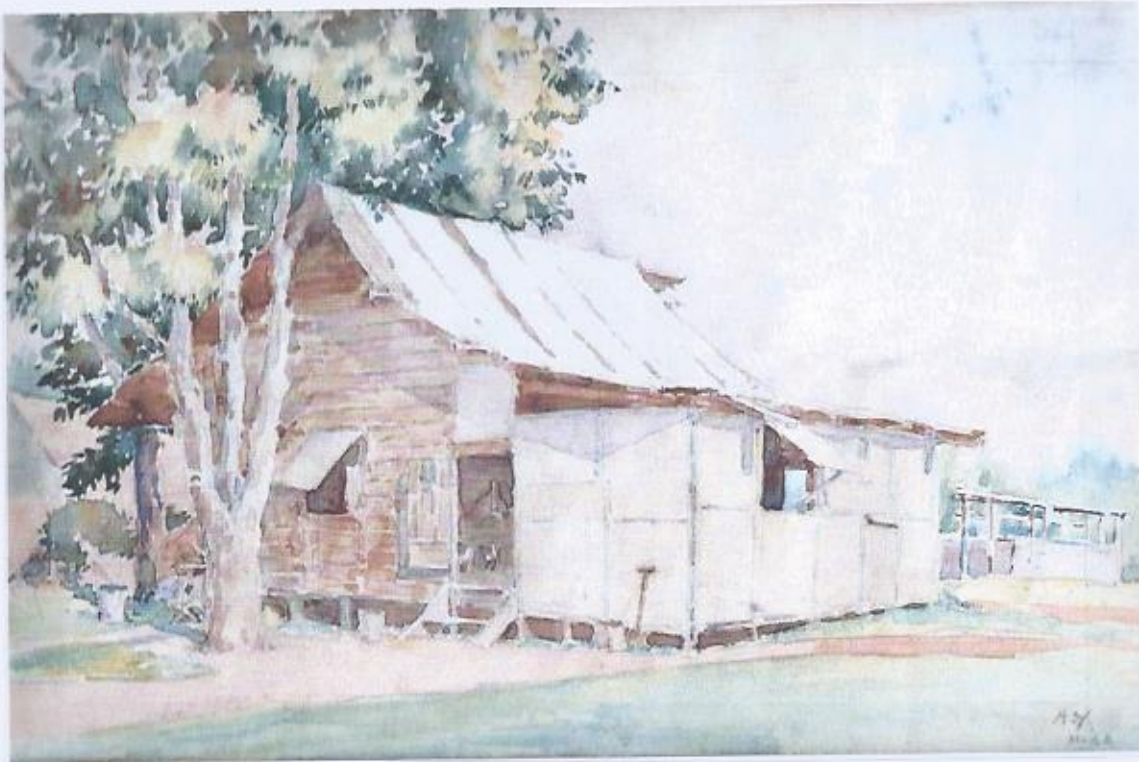
# APA KHABAR

Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk

[www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk](http://www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk)



**42nd EDITION  
APRIL 2015**



**Watercolour painting of a hut in Sime Road Camp  
By Walter Ansley-Young dated November 1944**

# APA KHABAR

Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk

[www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk](http://www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk)

42nd EDITION  
APRIL 2015



## A FULL YEAR OF REMEMBRANCE AND THANKSGIVING AHEAD IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, AUSTRALIA, SINGAPORE AND SUMATRA

Plans to mark and celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ending of World War Two in August and September are coming together as this edition of Apa Khabar is being written. The response of members to the events which are being finalized in Singapore and Sumatra is encouraging. However, it has to be pointed out that to date our own V-J Day Service at the National Memorial Arboretum is woefully undersubscribed. Despite distributing leaflets in October last year and January this year, only about 30 members have said that they wish to attend the Service and Buffet Lunch. This is a most disappointing response, and we very much hope that members will take the opportunity to book their places now. But, despite the cost of booking the Chapel, Marquee and a Piper, the Service will go ahead and is now being advertised on the NMA's website and is being thrown open to the general public. Except for those members who have already booked their seats, it will then be on a first come first served basis for places in the Chapel, which can hold 120. The buffet lunch after the Service is for MVG members only, and tickets will be issued for entry to the Marquee – Pod 3. The cost has been finalized at **£15.50 per person**. We very much hope that members will support this important date in our calendar and attend the Service, which is being taken by **Canon Christopher Samuels**, one of The Queen's Chaplains and Chaplain to the Dunkirk Veterans' Association. Events such as these take months of planning, and bookings have to be made well in advance. It would be sad if we had to cancel the Marquee and lunch due to lack of support.

### PLEASE WOULD YOU READ THE INFORMATION ABOUT V-J DAY & RETURN YOUR SLIP & CHEQUE IF ATTENDING.

During a recent visit to Singapore, discussions were held with **Mr. Jeyathurai Ayadurai**, Director of the Changi Museum concerning the events the MVG is planning for September. These events are now itemized in the enclosed leaflet, with the cost of each per person, given in Singapore Dollars and Sterling. The Historical Tour has been specifically designed to visit a part of the north-west area of Singapore Island which is not easily accessible by public transport, to see a section of the battlefield zone which is not part of the usual tourist trail. We will have the services of an experienced and knowledgeable guide, and the private visit to the Battlebox at the end of the tour, has been given to us as a favour by **Jeya**. Some of you may have already been to this historical site, but the exhibition is being upgraded, improved and the inaccurate information corrected and updated. We are fortunate to be given this opportunity for a personal, guided tour of the refurbished Battlebox before it is open again to the public.

Changes to the design of the Sime Road Plaque, and its unveiling have also been made. Due to the constraints of time, and in an attempt to choose a moment when most MVG members will be together in Singapore, we are delighted to announce that **Jeya** has chosen to hold the unveiling ceremony of the Plaque at **10 a.m. on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> September**. This will be followed by the MVG lunch at the Bark Café at noon, or a Reception after the unveiling. The design of the Plaque has also been altered so that it can be attached to the wall outside the Changi Museum, alongside the Plaque which shows the Changi area during the war, with the prison and various barracks. We are very grateful to **Jane Nielsen** for her work in re-designing the Plaque of the Sime Road Camp with the text now written underneath the plan of the camp. It is being made in Bronze relief by **Anwick Forge**, in Lincolnshire, whose detailed and beautiful work can be seen on their website.

The Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving at Kranji CWGC cemetery is due to take place at **5 p.m. on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> September**. A coach has been booked to take MVG members from Fort Canning Lodge (opposite the YWCA) to Kranji and back, leaving at 3.45 p.m. so that we are there in plenty of time. Seats will be reserved for MVG members – as in 2012, but **we do need to know how many people wish to go in the coach and have a reserved seat in Kranji.**

Finally, we are very fortunate to have been offered a private conducted tour of the Sime Road Camp area by **Jon Cooper**, battlefield archeologist extraordinaire, who has done such sterling work on uncovering the battlefield site of Adam Park, and has investigated Sime Road as well. This is planned for **Monday 14<sup>th</sup> September at 9 a.m.** Unless we have a large number of members wishing to go to Sime Road, travel to Sime Road will be left to individuals. If we have enough people to warrant ordering a coach, then this will be booked. It is therefore important to the organisers to know how many events you wish to attend ASAP.

### PLEASE WOULD YOU READ THE INFORMATION LEAFLET ABOUT SINGAPORE, DECIDE WHICH EVENTS YOU WISH TO ATTEND & RETURN THE SLIP WITH YOUR PAYMENT to Rosemary Fell, Elizabeth Adamson or Andrew Hwang.

The MVG owes a special word of thanks to BACSA (British Association for Cemeteries South Asia) for their generous donation of £1,000. £500 has been allocated to the building of the Muntok Museum of Peace and the second £500 is to help pay for new railings which are to be placed round the communal grave in Muntok Catholic Cemetery which contains the remains of 25 women civilian internees whose graves were removed from the Town Cemetery for houses and a petrol station.

Some time ago, it was reported in Apa Khabar that the Listed Heritage Buildings of the former army base on Beach Road in Singapore (and Singapore Volunteers HQ) were to be turned into a Hotel. This is now almost finished, and is to be called **The South Beach**. Several of the original blocks have been sensitively restored and kept intact – namely Blocks 1, 9, 14 & the NCO Club. On the site behind these, 2 hotel tower blocks have been erected of 35 & 45 stories respectively, plus 6 storey podiums and 3 basement levels of hotel offices, retail units and dwelling units. The tower blocks are of a very modern design, built of glass and are curved, in contrast to the more traditional Raffles Hotel almost opposite. The hotel was due to be opened in October 2014, but it is still not ready. At a chance meeting with **Jenny Soo**, the Executive Assistant Manager of **The South Beach**, we mentioned that it was being built on the site of the SSVF HQ, and she presented us with beautiful book called, **“South Beach: From Sea to Sky”** published by the South Beach Consortium about the evolution of Beach Road from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day.

Finally we send **WARM CONGRATULATIONS TO VETERAN MVG MEMBERS BILL PEARSON ON REACHING HIS 101<sup>ST</sup> BIRTHDAY AND BRENDA MACDUFF WHO IS 101 IN APRIL.** **HAPPY EASTER TO YOU ALL.**

**LATE NEWS: WE SEND OUR VERY SINCERE CONDOLENCES TO ALL OUR SINGAPOREAN MEMBERS ON LEARNING OF THE DEATH ON 23<sup>RD</sup> MARCH OF LEE KUAN YEW – OUTSTANDING STATESMAN & FATHER FIGURE.**

#### **ANNUAL COMMEMORATION SERVICE IN PERTH WA – 14<sup>th</sup> February 2015**

Attended by about 70 people, the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Service of Commemoration to mark the fall of Singapore in February 1942, took place in Perth WA in the City of Stirling Memorial Gardens. The service was arranged by **Bill and Elizabeth Adamson**, MVG's Secretary in Australia, in association with the **Malaya Borneo Veterans WA Inc.** The service commemorated: **“Those Australians who were killed in action, or were incarcerated as prisoners of war, having served within Malayan Volunteer Forces or Auxiliary units during the fighting withdrawal of Allied Forces down the Malayan peninsula, culminating in the final capitulation on Singapore Island – 15<sup>th</sup> February 1942.”**

The Master of Ceremonies, **Mr. Garry Burgoyne OAM**, called the congregation to order at the start of the service at 10 a.m. The National Flags were brought to half mast and the Bugler played “Stand Fast.” The service was taken by the **Rev. John Marshall RAN** and after his introductory words, wreaths were laid in front of the Memorial Plaques by the invited dignitaries, including the **Hon. Dr. Mike Nathan MLA**, Treasurer, Ministry for Energy, who represented the Premier of Western Australia; MVG secretaries from the U.K. and Australia; the President of the MBVA WA Inc., and families and friends of Australians who fought and died in WW2.

A verse from **Lawrence Binyon's** poem “Ode to the Fallen” was read by **Bill Adamson** followed by a minute's silence, and the “Last Post” was sounded. The service proceeded with addresses given by **Rosemary Fell, Elizabeth Adamson** and the **Hon. Dr. Mike Nathan**, and ended with Prayers, the singing of “Advance Australia Fair” and finally “Reveille.”

After the service refreshments were provided by the Lions Club – much needed cool drinks, on this very hot morning, and well-barbecued hot dogs, which were very welcome amid much conversation with old and new MVG members.

#### **AUSTRALIAN ARMY NURSES COMMEMORATION SERVICE 2015 – Report by Robert Gray**



This year's commemoration ceremony in Western Australia for the Australian Army Nurses was held, as usual, at the Point Walter Reserve on the 14<sup>th</sup> February, this being the anniversary of the sinking of the **Vyner Brooke** in 1942. It resulted in the death at sea of 12 Australian Army Nurses, two Colonial Service Nursing Sisters from Johore Bahru General Hospital, **Daphne Geraldine Strange** and **Marjorie B.N. Mustill**, as well as 20 other British civilian evacuees.

Of the 53 Army Nurses who were able to swim or float ashore to Banka Island, 21 were killed by Japanese soldiers in an infamous massacre on Radji Beach, and 32 were taken prisoner, one in four of whom

**The Vyner Brooke in Kuching Harbour** subsequently died from deprivation and disease in the camps.

Each year attendances continue to grow at the commemoration, which is sponsored by the Returned & Service League and the City of Melville. This year, attendees numbered approximately 50 (100 including members of the choir). Wreaths were laid by the local MP; recently retired Army Nursing Sisters; serving officers of the Army, Navy and Air Force and relatives of the Army Nurses lost in WW2. An Army Bugler played The Last Post, Reveille and The Rouse.

At appropriate points in the Service, the Melville *Born to Sing* community choir sang a capella the National Anthem (Advance Australia Fair), Londonderry Air (a song in the repertoire of the Women's Vocal Orchestra Choir in the prison camps at Palembang and Muntok), Amazing Grace and You'll Never Walk Alone.

**N.B. The photograph of the Vyner Brooke was kindly supplied by Neil McGregor, son of Australian Army Nurse Sister Sylvia Muir 2/13<sup>th</sup> AGH and POW. The ship is shown in Kuching harbour pre-war, and is probably one of the postcards which were sold on the ship.**

## UPDATE ON THE NEW MUNTOK MEMORIAL MUSEUM AND PARK – Report by Judy Balcombe

The town of Muntok lies on the Western tip of Banka Island overlooking the Banka Strait and Sumatra. The name means 'the end of the road', as it is the furthest point before reaching the sea.

The location was the end of the road for many people, who died or suffered severely in the Banka Strait and in Muntok between 1942 and 1945.

Muntok was bombed by Japanese planes in early February 1942, with 10 local casualties. Local people fled from their homes, taking refuge under the large **Batu Balai** rock formation for several weeks until ordered back to their homes by the Japanese.

Many thousands of people fleeing Singapore in February 1942 were killed as their boats were bombed and sunk. Two groups of men, one civilian woman and twenty one Australian nurses were killed by Japanese soldiers on Radji Beach near Muntok. Australia's official representative to Singapore, **Mr. Vivian Bowden**, was killed outside the Muntok Cinema on the 17<sup>th</sup> February 1942, after remonstrating with Japanese guards in support of a British soldier.

Many hundreds of civilian men, women and children, together with nuns, priests and surviving nurses were interned in a series of prison camps on Banka Island and Sumatra. The conditions in the Muntok Camps, where prisoners were held twice, were especially harsh with little food or medical care. One internee wrote that there were no birds heard singing in Muntok as they had all be caught and eaten.

By the end of the War, half of the men and one third of the women prisoners of the Japanese had died from dysentery, beri beri, malaria and starvation – all preventable and treatable conditions.

These events occurred over 70 years ago, but the people and the circumstances have not been forgotten. A memorial to the Australian Nurses stands near the **Tanjong Kelian** lighthouse, overlooking the Banka Strait. The lighthouse was a flashing beacon which guided the nurses to shore as they swam from the bombed **Vyner Brooke**.

Memorial plaques have been taken to the Muntok Jail, the site of the former men's camp and to **Kampung Menjelang**, where the women were imprisoned.

Donations from former internees, their families, the families of Australian nurses and the Malayan Volunteers Group have helped to deepen the original well once used by the prisoners at **Kampung Menjelang** and to build a new well.

A concert featuring the music of the original Palembang Camp Women's Vocal Orchestra was sponsored by MVG and held in 2013. The profits from this concert have been used to buy equipment for the Primary School at **Kampung Menjelang**, and will also be used to pay for a Plaque with the names of the people who died in Muntok Prison Camps, and who are believed to be still buried in the town.

Currently, the new Muntok Peace Memorial Museum at **Kampung Menjelang**, the site of the former Women's Camp, is nearing completion. A low semi-circular mural wall, a replica of that in the original Town Cemetery, and gates will mark the entrance to the Memorial Park in front of the Museum.

The land for the Museum and Park has been donated by the people of **Kampung Menjelang** and the building work has been undertaken with donations from former internees, their families, Australian Nurses' families, the MVG and BACSA (British Association for Cemeteries South Asia).

The Muntok Heritage Community has a strong interest in the history of Muntok and the plight of those who suffered in the Camps. They would like visitors to learn that war is harmful and to try to prevent it from happening again.

In 2009, UNESCO visited Muntok which was assessed as a town of great historical significance. In particular, Muntok was praised as a town where people of many races and religions live in harmony. A Heritage Path indicating significant WW2 locations will run from Muntok Harbour to the new Museum.

Although Muntok was, for many, the end of the road, it is hoped that the road will now lead forwards. **Kampung Menjelang**, in fact, means 'towards village', an apt name for the constructive changes now occurring. The Singapore evacuees and prisoners are now remembered. Visitors to Muntok will learn its history and the dangers of war. Strong ties with the local people will help Muntok no longer to be a place of dread, but instead to contribute to a lasting peaceful legacy.

Entrance into Kampung Menjelang  
Site of the Museum of Peace



The completed building which will have  
a small garden in front



## THE DIARY OF NOEL REES – Part 2 - 11<sup>TH</sup> August to 5<sup>th</sup> September 1945

With kind permission of June Jackson

[After sending out the January edition of Apa Khabar, the following information about Noel Rees was sent in by Fiona Bullen, MVG member in Australia:

Noel Rees' first wife was my Great Aunt. Her name was Noelle Eva Mabel Campbell and she went by the name of Mabel. Her sister, my grandmother Ena, was married to Dr. Cammie Bain. He is the Dr. Bain mentioned in the diary, as both Noel and Cammie were in Changi & then Sime Road POW Camps.

Noel and Mabel had 3 children altogether - John David Campbell Rees, born in Penang in 1932; Jeremy Stephen Campbell Rees also born in Penang in 1933 and Jennifer Campbell Rees born in Singapore in 1936. Mabel & Jennifer escaped on one of the ships which left Singapore, but was still quite young when her parents divorced.]

August 26<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

10 p.m.

Had to come in and do a bit more writing. It's a lovely night outside. Singapore is all lit up, there is a great glow right across the sky. I suppose we are about 9 miles away out here. The Camp looks quite strange now the Blackout is off. Like a mining camp, all the huts are round a great amphitheatre. Boys in great form. Butter simply wonderful, a good ½ lb. each. I ate mine in great spoonfuls. What a glorious feeling – real butter again. Great advert. for the Cold Storage too!! It is Sunday. I heard an amusing story – one of our kitchen workers was at the Evening Service. **Revd. Colin King** was in the middle of his address, all eyes focused on him. Suddenly the lorry bearing the butter hove into view. All eyes swung round and saliva could almost be seen drooling from the corners of the mouths of the worshippers. The preacher too forgot himself and ceased his discourse till the vehicle was out of sight.

We hear that Japan will be occupied from tomorrow and that occupied regions will be handed over at the same time. So perhaps tomorrow. We seem to be settling down to this sort of inter regnum now and with the Nips sending in food, things are looking up. Fresh fish came in today as well and there are rumours of Cheese tomorrow! God, what wealth! We were eating snails last week! Only a month ago \$3 as being paid for one biscuit and a small tin of Klim fetched \$50. Will people at home ever credit the yarns we will have to tell. As I finish, the whole hut is out gazing at Singapore away in the distance.

### A GREAT DAY.

August 27<sup>th</sup> Monday

Had to sleep in last night – frightful – mosquitoes and bed bugs galore. At 8 a.m. exactly this morning a big gun or maroon went off in Singapore. Made us jump. They say it is the signal that our people have taken over. We should see something today.

Later – 7 p.m.

No, nothing has happened so far and it's too late now anyhow. Rain coming down in torrents all afternoon. Never mind – no one is complaining today. I haven't seen such contented looks on the faces of the wretched internees for years. It's the food that's done it. The Nips are simply falling over themselves in their eagerness to fill us up with good things. Yesterday 2 tons of butter – beautiful stuff, and today one whole pound of Kraft cheese each, absolutely incredible. It must be at least 4 years old but it tastes delicious. Tomorrow there are wild rumours of pheasants, turkeys, grouse and ptarmigan coming in. It is just too much. I am beginning to be afraid we will be looking too well when our fellows arrive. Someone said just now it was just like the way the local Chinese fatten up their poultry before displaying them for sale. This evening fellow opposite was munching just like a contented old cow and listening to the evening bulletin giving details of what the Nips have sent in with an air of great nonchalance, whereas a week ago the same man looked so haggard and listened to what he was to have to eat the next day like a man hearing his death sentence being pronounced. Snails and potato leaves seem to be a thing of the past now alright. No news all day from outside except for that gun – wonder what it meant. Afraid this diary is very disjointed, but I take it up and just jot things down as occasion offers. One bad thing. It is hard now to get volunteers to carry on essential services – an appeal has just been read out in which we were reminded that in the past each man had pulled his weight so well. It's the old story I'm afraid. When food is short everyone jumps for the extra rations, but now there is plenty – Fancy having to beg for cooks for the Hospital kitchen, a week ago you could have had 3,000! Seems a pity. So near the end too. Wednesday is now only 2 days away. Like a kid at school.

August 28<sup>th</sup> Tuesday

I should have written up my diary before going to bed last night in view of what we heard read out to us in the hut at about 9.30 but by the time the fellow finished reading the special bulletin it was too late. It was a very lengthy business so I can only give a brief resume of its contents.

**Collinge** (Men's Rep.), **Major General Saito**, Jap Staff Officers, Swiss Consul and **Mr. Sweitzer**, Red Cross

representative had a 4 hour conference – interesting items arising:-

1. The Nips **after 3 ½ years** have recognized **Mr. Sweitzer** as Red Cross representative.
2. Raffles Hotel, Seaview Hotel & flats in Grange Road are being made ready for us to evacuate to when our troops arrive.
3. Our troops are expected here in between 6 and 10 days time.
4. In the meantime, we are to stay where we are and keep calm.
5. As much food as possible will be sent in.

Wait a bit there – a shout of “Plane Over” –

Must rush and see.

Yes, it's ours alright, 4 engines, came low over the Camp – 12.30 p.m. Tuesday August 28<sup>th</sup> HURRAH. We've all gone mad. No markings, at least all painted over, can see our rings roughly underneath the grey. Clouds of leaflets. Collected one – in Japanese. Contains message to guards to look after us and get back to their quarters. What a beautiful bit of cheek after all these years. I saw the man wave and throw the leaflets out. It was a Liberator.

#### Later 6 p.m.

The plane or planes circled over us and the town for 3 hours – waving – taking photos. God, what a thrill. At 6 p.m. exactly another appeared and came very low over us – another lot of leaflets – this time in English. I attach one – also one in Hindustani. Bet the Sikhs have the wind up. What a day. I'm afraid I am writing like an excited schoolboy but if you only knew how we all felt. It's been worth it – Almost. Just been told 8 Catalina flying boats loaded with 10 tons of provisions have already left Australia and are expected over the Camp tomorrow. Has anyone ever had such a succession of disappointments and thrills. We must be headline news alright at home now. I couldn't finish that stuff about the meeting yesterday. I simply couldn't remember it all. It was all marvellous. We can even bear it for 6 – 10 days now with all this food and news coming in.

We had all the latest news read out today, 5 pages of it. To hear Reuter after all this hole in the corner stuff – Have you heard etc. They say we've landed at Penang – Sumatra is in our hands – God what a lot of lies we have heard. Well, I suppose at least 6 good fellows gave their lives to get us news in Changi Gaol. Rumours are cheaper. That story will make dreadful reading when all the facts are known. **Dr. Stanley, Stevenson, Perry and Long** – all murdered – slowly done to death – Poor old **Stanley** I never knew a man so clever with his hands, they brought him on a stretcher to be tortured in the end. He made 3 attempts at suicide. Don't let's forget it all. They are being humiliated now alright. **“It is hoped that the Allies will allow us to build wooden ships.”** That's the stuff. Very sorry. Nipponese very polite gentlemen. Very sorry. We've got them, boys.

#### August 29<sup>th</sup> 9.20 p.m.

Another big day in many ways – made momentous by the visit of **Sweitzer** with Japanese to inspect the Camp. Visited our kitchen. Stopped frequently to shake hands and talk with internees he knew. Everyone smiling including Nips.

Bulletin re: visit had items:-

1. Catalinas definitely arrive with food tomorrow.
2. **H.M.S. Nelson** and an aircraft carrier in Penang. Minesweepers are at work in the Straits of Malacca.
3. The Fleet arrives in Singapore on Sunday and our troops enter the city on Monday. This is now absolutely certain so we now know we have 4 days more to wait.
4. He said the discipline of the Nip troops on duty in Singapore was remarkable in view of the humiliations they were being subjected to at the hands of the populace – especially the Chinese – spitting, taunts etc. Yes, we must hand it to them – so far there have been no incidents at all.
5. The people were marching through the streets singing “The Trans are coming back.”

Lorry loads of parcels from the people of Singapore continue to pour into the Camp. This is very touching evidence of their kind feelings for us. The poor people probably are in just as bad case as we are, too.

A wireless has been installed in the Camp and I must be off at 10p.m. to listen to the B.B.C. After 3 ½ years to hear again old Big Ben. What a thrill!

**Jennifer** is 9 today. Will soon be with her.

#### August 30<sup>th</sup> Thursday 5.30 p.m.

#### **WHAT A DAY!!!!**

Our chaps have come - at least some of them. Turned up in a plane which landed at the new aerodrome at Changi. Got into a car – 4 of them and drove straight here. One was an Indian Medical Service Officer and another was in battle dress with a reddish Tammie and, rumour has it, a couple of revolvers. Went straight to the Nip guard house (the notorious Green House) and didn't the Nips jump. I hear it was a real treat – collected all their arms, swords, rifles etc. and bunged the lot down a bore hole. One of the Nip guards had been trying to stop the kids cheering. He got it in the neck all right. **General Saito** turned up a little late in his big car and said he was sorry he was late for the discussion.

"We haven't come to discuss anything with you," says one of our boys. "We have come to give you orders." And proceeded to do so. Emptied the Green House – chucked all the Nip stuff out and told them to remain in the guard room. Our chaps then installed themselves. They were immediately taken (for) a short tour of this Camp. Went to the Hospital and the Old Men's Ward. What they saw there must have shocked them. We are used to all this now – horrible sights have been the rule here not the exception. I wonder what they thought of **Calderwood**. Perhaps by now he is 5 stone!! There will be murder alright later when those Gestapo fiends are run to earth. We are lucky to have seen this day – lucky to have lived to see it. It has been more than worth it. It seems too incredible to be true. 4 Englishmen fly from Colombo and virtually take over a whole fortress, and we meet them so that they can see our faces and hear our comments, some of them are I fear very unprintable when referring to our old persecutors. It was a dreadful morning. Simply poured till 11.30 then cleared up. No Catalinas.

Well, I mustn't forget to describe last night's wireless news from London. God, what a crowd. The whole hill was covered with people. I heard every single word. 10 p.m. (local). Pitch dark except for the hut lights around. "This is London calling." What a moment, and then the news. Began with giving a resume of a speech by a Japanese – **Baron Hirumi** or some such fellow. Anyhow what he said was – "We Japanese can now no longer regard ourselves as a superior race" and did we laugh. "We have been gagged." "We have been previously misled." "We must have free speech and a free Press." "Our only hope of salvation as a race is to carry out implicitly all the terms of the surrender," etc. etc. Then we were told the *South Dakota* was in Tokyo Bay with **MacArthur**, **Wainright** and **Percival** (Malaya's ex G.O.C.) on board. They were to witness the signature of the Jap representatives. **Percival** who was so humiliated here in Singapore on February 15<sup>th</sup> 1942 at the Ford Works, Bukit Timah Road, Singapore. It must have given **Percival** peculiar and profound satisfaction. Our ships were now in Malayan waters. Somebody in England had had a plate of fried mushrooms. What a sigh went up then! Oh, it was all wonderful – just like a dream. In fact, it must be a dream. It cannot be true. It cannot be true that we are free at last. Lastly, we have received more Red Cross parcels and I am feeling so sick.

### THE BIGGEST DAY IN MY LIFE – SO FAR AUGUST 31<sup>ST</sup> 1945

[To be concluded in July]

#### PRIEST WHO DIED IN JAP JAIL DEDICATED SONG TO CHURCHILL

[From the North Tonawanda NY Evening News, Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup> March 1946. Courtesy of Tom Tryniski, Proprietor of [www.fultonhistory.com](http://www.fultonhistory.com) With thanks to Robert Gray who transcribed from the original.]

New York (UP) – **Winston Churchill** has acknowledged the receipt, it was disclosed today, of a song composed and dedicated to him by a priest who was dying in a Japanese prison camp when he pledged a foreign correspondent to deliver the document to the former Prime Minister.

Through **J.V. Thompson**, British Consul at Miami, Florida, **Churchill** expressed appreciation to the correspondent **William H. McDougall Jr.**, of the United Press Associations, who was interned in Sumatra with the song's composer, the **Rev. B.E. Bakker**, a Dutch Roman Catholic priest.

"Mr. **Churchill** was very touched by your account of the circumstances in which the song was dedicated to him," the consul wrote to **McDougall**, "and is most grateful to you for carrying out Mr. **Bakker's** dying request to send him the manuscript." In his letter to **Churchill**, **McDougall** explained that **Father Bakker**, who had served as a parish priest in Muntok, Banka, Sumatra, was interned with other Dutch civilians and British refugees. **Churchill's** memorable speech of 27<sup>th</sup> April 1941, so inspired the priest, **McDougall** said, that he set to music the words of **Arthur Conan Clough's** poem "Say Not," which **Churchill** had quoted before parliament.

**McDougall** was fleeing Java in March 1942, when his ship was sunk in the Indian Ocean. He reached Sumatra in a lifeboat and was interned at Palembang Jail where he met **Father Bakker**. Nearly 60% of the original internees died during the ensuing 3 years, and **Father Bakker** himself succumbed on 15<sup>th</sup> June 1945, at the aged of 43. Before he died, **Father Bakker** commissioned **McDougall** to deliver the song when the war ended. A copy was made for him by **Sister Mary Sienna**, head of the music department, at the College of St. Mary-of-the-Wasatch, Salt Lake City. Utah.

"**Father Bakker** was a soft-voiced little man with a black Van Dyke beard," **McDougall** wrote. "'Gentle' is the best word to describe him. But inside his mild exterior burned fires of zeal both for his faith and his fellow prisoners. With other priests and brothers he laboured in our makeshift hospital. He taught Chinese and Malay to prisoners interested in these languages. His choir gave monthly concerts. Somehow, and despite having no musical instruments, he found time to compost prolifically. This is only one of many compositions. He was the busiest and best loved man in prison."

## THE MATCHBOX – by David Brent

### Part 2

...He had hardly heard his mother call out, "David! Where are you going?"

He only felt a desperate surging rage that the Japanese had attacked his home town and done such damage to its people. He felt vulnerable and endangered but worse, so helpless. As he gazed in the direction of the of the disappeared bomber he heard the sound of another low flying plane again approaching from the north and bent down to grab a loose stone off the granite driveway that led to the car garage and loaded it into the catapult sling. The roar grew rapidly louder and a second twin-engined fighter bomber appeared flying very low. David turned and drew his catapult back and aimed at a point in front of the bomber and furiously let fly. In the seconds as the stone arced into the air, David could see the helmeted face of the plane's pilot looking down. Then in a flash it was gone heading south, its roar becoming a drone as it disappeared south.

David's mother rushed out of the back door. "David, come back at once! The 'all-clear' hasn't sounded yet!" The next day the air raid siren sounded again in the morning. It had become almost a routine now and once again as the family and staff sat in the store room the bombing could be heard from the direction of George Town. Rumours of unrest and looting were spreading and after the air raid David's mother appeared apprehensive as they discussed the situation and what was going to happen.

At lunch time, David's father arrived home from the Volunteers' Headquarters in George Town. He looked tired and his uniform was rumpled and stained with sweat patches as he took his topee off and sat down. David and his mother joined him and sat down at the small rattan table by the side doors downstairs as David's father slumped backwards wiping the sweat from his brow with the back of his hand.

"Things are not looking good. The Japs are pushing us back on all fronts. They've got airfields in Thailand and we haven't been able to stop their raids. If we can't hold them back they could be here in Penang in a few day's time. We can't risk it. It's been decided to evacuate all women and children from the island and everyone has to be at the ferry terminal at 10 o'clock tonight with one suitcase per person."

"But darling, I thought that the ferry crews had disappeared, to get out of town."

"That's right. We're bringing up some survivors from the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* by train from the Singapore Naval Base to man the ferries."

It was a sombre lunch with little said as thoughts went through all their minds. David's father said that there was very little that could be done to defend Penang. The armaments and equipment were old and few and the troops inexperienced. All that could be done was being done with the Volunteers supporting the civilian authorities whenever possible and providing sentries for vital installations. But the situation was perilous. After David's father left to return to the Volunteers' headquarters, David and his mother started packing a suitcase each ready for the evening. David simply sadly re-packed the case he had brought with him for his holidays and then wandered around the house and the garden – to have to leave so soon, perhaps never to return. Jumbled thoughts tumbled around in his mind. How the world had suddenly changed. He wondered how he could do something which would keep his linkage to his home, keep a covenant to return one day. Then he thought of it.

In the pantry, David found the matches which were kept on the shelf in the second store room next to the pantry where all the crockery and cutlery were kept, and emptied the matches out of the box. He took a tablespoon from the box of cutlery and went to the small plot of earth, his 'garden' at the back of the house where the tall papaya tree now stood. Kneeling down he scooped up some earth and stones placing them in the matchbox. Then he plucked a few blades of grass also from the edge of the bed and placed them in the matchbox with the earth. David gently closed the matchbox and on the table in the pantry he carefully wrapped the matchbox in brown paper and tied the small package with string. He had it. He had a piece of his home which nobody could take from him, and he swore to himself to return and to bring it back one day.

That afternoon, David and his mother went out to the bird cage hanging on the verandah outside the dining room. David's mother loved the two budgerigars, one green and one blue, Bertie and Betty. She usually clipped the flight feathers to restrict their flight so that they could flutter around the lounge. Fortunately, it was long since the flight feathers were last clipped and they had grown again to full length. Sadly, she reached into the cage and took out Bertie and gave him to David. Then reached in for Betty and held her.

"Lots of luck!" David's mother called out as both birds were thrown into the air and flew off into the tree tops nearby.

David's mother put her hand to her face in surprise, "You know, David, I'd completely forgotten. Today's my birthday. The 13<sup>th</sup> December!"

It was with heavy hearts that David and his mother silently sat in the car as Mohamed drove them slowly to the ferry terminal that night with only the parking lights illuminated. Their last memory of the family home had been Buster, the dog, sitting by the front door watching them leave with curiosity. What would happen to him? Mohamed had asked not to have to drive to town again in case of another attack but it had been explained that this would be his last trip to town. David and his mother sadly bid Mohamed farewell and, carrying their suitcases, walked slowly to the ferry terminal. The whole area was crowded with cars and people milling about.



The entire town was blacked out and all cars were prohibited from turning on their headlights. The evacuation operation had been carried out in secrecy as the military feared any leak of the intent to the enemy. It would have been a disaster if the Japanese had attacked with all the women and children so exposed. As it was, to everybody's consternation an air raid siren was suddenly sounded, but it was a false alarm.

Husbands and wives bid a tearful farewell in the gloomy surroundings. David's father was there, and tears streamed down David's mother's face after the exchange of farewells and good wishes as they both made their way along the ferry terminal towards the ferry.

The large ferry berthed at the quay side gently moved in the water, dark and sombre with all the canvas storm screens rolled down around the sides to black out the dim deck lighting. At the gangplank a sailor helped the women and children mount the plank to board the ferry and find seats inside. About half an hour later the ferry shuddered as the engines started and David felt the ferry swing away from the quay side and the engines increased speed to begin the crossing to the mainland. David went to the stern and through a small gap in the canvas screen took a last look at Penang. There was an orange glow over a part of the town where some fires still burned and in the distance like a beautiful backdrop Penang Hill was silhouetted against a dark velvet sky, a full moon suspended above. It was an unforgettably breathtaking last view.

At Prai, the port near Butterworth on the mainland, the ferry drew alongside the terminal and moored securely. The gangplank was lowered to the quayside and the women and children crossed lugging their suitcases and bags and were directed to a passenger train nearby which they mounted to find themselves seats for the journey. It was near midnight when the train pulled out of the station travelling south to an unknown destination.

The heat was oppressive and with all the women and children crowded into the carriages the discomfort was unbearable. David's mother found a seat but David could only find a spot under a seat on the dusty floor where he slept fitfully as the train rattled and thundered through the night until the early morning light.

The first stop was Kuala Lumpur, and as the train slowly pulled into the main platform of the ornate railway station with its exotic Moorish architecture, David wondered whether this was all a dream or reality. Fortunately, the Kuala Lumpur volunteer organization had received news of the refugees' evacuation from Penang by train, and were prepared on the station platform with trestle tables loaded with buns and tea urns for refreshment, a very welcome sight to the depressed, weary and hungry train passengers.

Somewhat refreshed, the passengers once again mounted the train, thanking the doomed Kuala Lumpur volunteers for their kindness and waving as the train pulled out of the station and started once more on its journey south.

The journey was hot and uneventful as the train sped past endless rows of rubber trees and padi fields, speeding through small railway stations along the route. By late afternoon the train crossed the causeway at Johore Bahru on the southernmost tip of Malaya into Singapore, and continued on to the railway terminal at Keppel Harbour. Here the passengers clambered aboard military trucks which were waiting to take them to their final destination in Singapore - **S.S. Nellore** - a Blue Funnel Line passenger-cargo vessel berthed alongside in Keppel Harbour. That morning Singapore had experienced another of many raids on the city by Japanese bombers and workers were removing damaged brickwork, cement and twisted metal. The area was full of military personnel and military vehicles.

On board **S.S. Nellore** all cabins had been taken, and the refugees from Penang were allocated the stern cargo hold of the ship and given straw-filled palliasses on which to sleep. It was an apprehensive time for all as evening drew close and the warm night descended.

That night, the ship left Keppel Harbour under cover of darkness and headed south. David and some others decided to sleep on the deck as the cargo hold was stifling hot and oppressive. The cooling breeze was very welcome and David soon fell asleep.

Waking at sunlight and expecting to find the ship at sea heading south, David was astounded to find the ship back in Keppel Harbour. At a makeshift breakfast in the stern hold that morning, the news passed along was that the captain had received a signal that Japanese war ships had been reported near the ship's course ahead, and the captain had returned to Keppel Harbour for safety.

That night the ship slid quietly out of Keppel Harbour once more, heading south. This time they had made it away and arrived at Surabaya in the Dutch East Indies a few days later.

The ship stayed in harbour for about two weeks, during which time the refugees were billeted with hospitable Dutch government servants who were very generous and kind to the women and children. The ship's crew and local workmen also built timber bunks for the refugees so that the remainder of the journey would be more comfortable.

Christmas was spent in Surabaya, a strange celebration under strange circumstances and the last such Christian celebration to be enjoyed in that part of the world for several years to come. A few days later the ship left port and made a course for Fremantle in Western Australia where it arrived safely about a week or so later. David was back where he had started in November.

In the years ahead, David kept his matchbox and its special contents, every now and then opening the matchbox to look at the contents which progressively grew drier and more shrivelled as the years passed.

[To be continued in July.]

## GIN SLINGS AND METHODISTS

The Life of Walter Ansley-Young – written by his granddaughter Velvet Douglas

I never heard my grandfather raise his voice; he was tall and gentle and created mice out of white handkerchiefs, which jumped up his arm. He tried to show me how to do it and must have smiled at my bumbling attempts. I was only three. **Walter** was my mother **Lorna's** father and we were at her parents' bungalow in Klang. Not their original bungalow - that had gone with the war - but the one they lived in afterwards, which was the old Nursing Home. My grandmother never cared for the dining room, particularly since it had originally been the operating theatre. My grandfather was born in Penang in March 1884 and duly christened **Walter Ansley** at St. George's Church. His parents were **Amelia** and **Walter Young**. **Walter Young's** middle name was **Reginald**; he had been staying with his brother, **Robert Heyden Young**, in Singapore. Both men were born in Ceylon and both were surveyors. **Robert Heyden Young** was later responsible for the re-survey of the whole of Singapore Island at the turn of the last century – a project which took twelve years to complete. It was while **Walter** was staying with his brother that he took up the appointment of surveyor, Penang, where he met his seventeen-year-old bride-to-be, **Amelia Towers**. **Amelia** was a ship's captain's daughter and had been born on a brig called the *Water Lily* in Nagasaki harbour in 1864. Her mother died not long afterwards, and **Captain Towers** left his baby daughter in Penang with a **Dr. Green** and his wife. The **Greens** brought **Amelia** up; by the time she was ten **Captain Towers** had already died. I don't know when **Amelia** was first introduced to **Walter R. Young** but they were married in Penang in 1881, and went on to have six children, **Walter Ansley**, my grandfather, was the second child. He had four sisters and a younger brother. **Walter Ansley** was eight years old when his father, who was engaged on survey work at Batu Gajah, F.M.S., fell ill. He was taken to the General Hospital in Penang where he died. Perhaps it is not surprising that the young **Walter** was interested in medicine from an early age. While his sisters boarded at a mission school in Calcutta, **Walter** is thought to have been educated in Madras. I know that he went to Medical School in Madras later on because **Lorna** told me that he used to cycle to college followed by his tiffin-carrier, who would run behind him with his lunch. Meanwhile, the continuing story of **Walter's** mother had been unfolding in Penang. During 1891 the Methodists of Singapore, an American body that called itself – even then- the Malayan Mission Conference, had extended their work to Penang, where the Mission had opened the Anglo-Chinese School in a single Carnarvon Street shop-house. After **Amelia's Walter** died in 1892, **Ernest Lau** of the Methodist Archives, Singapore wrote, "**Mrs. Young**, a widowed lady came into the work of the Penang Mission. She played the organ for the Sunday services that were held in the old Armenian Church." A member of the Mission, on finding out how capable **Mrs. Young** was, persuaded her to take charge of the girls' school - also recently opened. "**Mrs. Young** did all she could in making the school attractive and also in visiting Chinese homes. The girls' school grew to twenty pupils." **Amelia** became its first principal. Likewise, the Anglo-Chinese Boys' School had been growing apace and, by 1893, the school had acquired five shop-houses in Carnarvon Street. This was the year when the man destined to become **Amelia's** second husband, **George Frederick Pykett**, came on to the Penang scene to take charge of the boys' school. Together with **Amelia** he was to build a lasting foundation for the generations of students who received their education at the "*dear old A.C.S.*" over a period of forty years – but theirs is another story. Returning to **Walter** – after Madras he attended the London Hospital Medical College from 1907 to 1910 when he qualified as MRCS LRCP. During 1908, his mother and stepfather were on furlough. Whether **Walter** had yet met his future wife, **Violet Dingley**, is unknown; if he had, it is likely that she would have been seen as an untimely distraction by his mother and stepfather, had she been introduced to them. **Walter's** stepfather was held in high esteem by all **Amelia's** children, which may explain why, when **Walter** and **Violet (Vi)** did marry, on 12 th August 1909, eight months before **Walter** qualified, that they did so in secret at the Registry Office in Islington, London, and kept it quiet until later. After qualifying, **Walter** worked in the east end of London and in Wales for a couple of years. Their first daughter,

Beryl, was born during this period. Beryl is registered as Ansley-Young and I naughtily wondered if Vi had anything to do with officially hyphenating Walter's middle name to Young, giving it a more distinguished appearance worthy of an up and coming physician and surgeon! The three of them set sail for Malaya in 1913.

All Walter's sisters initially became teachers at the Anglo-Chinese School, Penang, before marrying their teacher, planter or engineer husbands. The eldest, May Young, married an American missionary, Jim Hoover, who began his overseas calling as a schoolmaster at the Penang A.C.S. May and Jim married in 1904, and together they served an immigrant Foochow community in Sibu, Sarawak, for thirty years, at a time when head-hunting was still something of a deterrent. Walter's younger brother, Bob, was both planter and R.F.C./R.A.F. Pilot. He married in Edinburgh in 1919 and brought his bride out to a rubber plantation in Pahang.

Walter joined the practice of Dr. Braddon of Seremban, in Negri Sembilan before moving up to Klang, Selangor, where he became Medical Officer to the Highlands & Lowlands Rubber Estates. He had his own practice, and their bungalow was the only European bungalow along the Port Swettenham – Klang road, and they lived there from c. 1915 until 1941, when the army took it over prior to the Japanese invasion. Their second daughter, Lorna, my mother, was born at this bungalow.

Vi was a wonderful hostess and she and Walter entertained a great deal. "My mother was good looking, lively and amusing, and very fashion conscious," writes Beryl in her memoirs. "There were very few women in and around Klang when we went there, and I can't remember any who came to the Sunday morning gin sling parties my parents gave – they all seemed to be men."

Any references to life being one long period of hard work and clean living failed to cut any ice with Vi. The very idea appalled her, and so Vi saw to it that Walter took their daughters on his visits to Penang to see his mother, while she got on with other things. I would like to think that, over time, each woman came to appreciate the qualities in the other because Vi was hard working too, but she was not cut out to be a missionary.

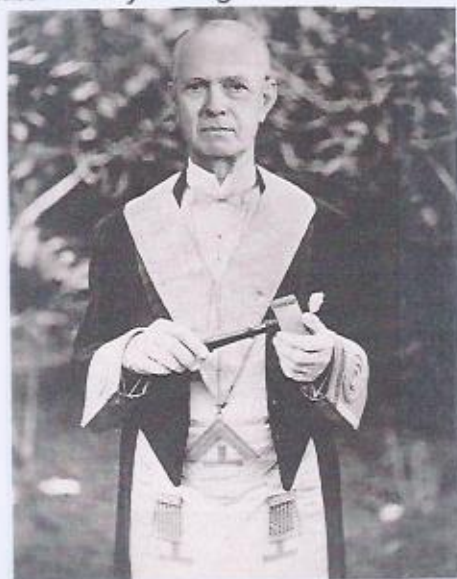
Walter was a Freemason and had been initiated into the Klang Lodge in 1916, aged 32, progressing through a series of structured levels within his Lodge to the position of Worshipful Master by the age of 39. He continued his involvement with Freemasonry until he left Malaya in 1958 but remained a member of his Lodge until his death.

There are two photographs of Walter in his Freemasonry regalia, which fascinated me as a child: in one he is still a young man, and in the other he is as I remember him. For some reason, Walter had been unable to dress for the later photograph, so the photographer simply superimposed Walter's white-haired head, including his neck, on to his younger self without disturbing either his robes or the background.

Walter Ansley-Young - Freemason c.1923



Walter Ansley-Young - Freemason c.1955



Towards the end of 1926, the *Straits Times* reports that Walter Ansley-Young, had opened Klang's first Chinese

Maternity Hospital with the help of generous funding, mainly from the Chinese community, and that **Walter** had designed and directed the building himself. An off-the-ground, single-storey structure of reinforced concrete, it could accommodate 23 patients. The nursing staff consisted of "2 qualified midwives, 3 probationers and 2 amahs. Patients will be admitted any hour of the day or night." **Walter** was the hospital's first honorary physician, a post he kept for many years. Apart from the promotion of women's health, it was tuberculosis which most engaged **Walter's** attention and he saw many, many cases among the tappers on the rubber estates. He spoke Tamil and at least one of the Chinese dialects, but Malay was possibly **Walter's** best language, for he gave speeches in Malay at high gatherings. He attended the Sultan of Selangor.

**Lorna** writes that as a child she recalls being awake one morning when **Walter** was returning from a call. "It was just light so must have been around 6 a.m. On hearing the car I went out to see him walking up the front steps. It was long before the days of sun-bathing, or any kind of stripping off, and although he was very tall and well-built, he was never ever one for bodily displays – in fact I never even saw him in his under-pants – far too undignified! So, can you imagine the look on my face when he said, 'I've had a long night; I think I'll just leave my clothes here and go back to bed for half an hour.' Whereupon he undid his buttons, flies and all – to my gaping astonishment – and dropped everything on the floor; shrieks of delighted relief at the last moment on seeing his baju and sarong underneath as he waddled off to the bedroom!"

Before and even after WW2 there circulated a rumour that **Walter** was the illegitimate son of **Sir Frank Swettenham** (1850-1946) by a Eurasian woman. I was to hear this twice – the first time as a schoolgirl from an adult individual, known to be a bit of a 'stirrer'. The second time was as late as 2010 from an old school friend of **Lorna** whose husband had been briefly posted to Singapore during the early fifties; she shrugged and said it had been common knowledge. Evidently she never thought to question it, and neither did she mention it to **Lorna**. (Neither had I, but children did not air such matters in those days!) Since the closest family members are often the last to hear, **Beryl** and **Lorna** never did.

Then during the 1980s someone writing a book on **Swettenham** was so intrigued by this rumour that he decided to explore it further. He could find no facts to support the rumour but concocted various scenarios of possible pointers, connections – all supposition, and all of which he wanted to put into print! A complaint that **Walter's** obituary in 1961 "gave no indication of his parentage, except that he was associated with a family with strong Methodist connections" was the warmest the author ever got, yet he failed to follow this up. Instead, he believed he had it on authority (from some mistaken or mischievous Datin) that **Walter** had travelled often to Ipoh during the 1950s to visit a mysterious aged mother!

When **Lorna** heard – indirectly – from the author, who was fishing for information to support his theories, she was at first amused, then indignant, and finally outraged and, on the crest of this emotion, wrote a stinker of a letter from which all her fury poured in fiercely attacking the despoiler of her father's memory. It is a letter of which I am delighted to hold a copy – it's pure **Lorna**. I felt fleetingly for the recipient. Did I? No – because I had had to bear my own disappointment – that of accepting that I had no Eastern blood in my veins after all! As a schoolgirl with as little appreciation, as he, on the impact on others, I had thought it quite exciting!

Towards the end of 1940, **Walter** was lecturing the Selangor Local Defence Corps on First Aid. (The LDC was formed in September 1940, along the lines of the Home Guard in the U.K. – mostly men considered too old for Volunteer Forces Service.)

He was Medical Officer to the Medical Auxiliary Services at Malacca Street in Singapore during January and February 1942, until interned as a civilian internee at Changi at the start of the Japanese Occupation and, in 1944, at Sime Road Camp. **Vi**, together with **Beryl** – who was married by them with two girls – were all evacuated to South Africa on the *Empress of Japan*. Two of **Walter's** sisters were also evacuated and the other two were already in the U.K. **Lorna**, also married, was in London. **Walter's** brother **Bob**, after an astonishing escape to Sumatra, ended up in a camp in Palembang – "three and a half years of hell on earth."

In June 1945, **Bob** was moved to Changi: "Arriving here on 1<sup>st</sup> June was like being transported into Paradise from Hell," he later wrote. In Changi, **Bob** heard from **Jimmie Gomm** (**Beryl's** husband) that **Walter** was in Sime Road Camp. "In order to let **Walter** know I was here, I sent him some money, and was shown his signature at having received it, so he knows I'm here." Both **Walter** and **Bob** survived – their uncle, **Robert Heydon Young**, who was, by 1942, well into his eighties, did not. Family nephews and sons-in-law were captured by the Japanese, sons were killed in the skies over Britain. Their mother and stepfather had passed away during the 1930s and were spared the horrors of war, fear for family and the despair over the fate of all the A.C.S. children of yesteryear, who had passed through their hands – predominantly Chinese, but Indian, Malay and Eurasian too, and a sprinkling of family grandchildren.

## CAPTIVITY MEMOIRS by Bill Pearson – Part 1

Thankfully, after our induction into Pudu Gaol and its Jap staff, we were handed over to our own kind, also incarcerated in the Gaol. We were so relieved after the trauma of the last few days, and it was a relief to be able to talk without fear of reprisals. Of course, we were questioned about our previous role and records were noted of the date of our capture after the ambush and the death of our companions. Then our position as POWs was explained and we learned that Pudu Gaol contained many hundreds of British and Commonwealth troops; that food was in short supply and very poor; that troops and junior officers had to work; which included moving ammunition dumps around Kuala Lumpur, retrieving and assembling arms of all types and locating them in one central location. Our troops and junior officers made sure that a great many of the weapons etc. they collected and cleaned were in fact made useless for further use by the Japs. There were many beatings and acts of cruelty from the guards, who were in fact not Japs at all but Korean conscripts and we had no redress whatever.

I had been in Pudu for about three weeks when I was stricken ill with violent pains in my stomach and was unable to work or eat. **Ted Elkan** tried to look after me in the cell we shared with two other chaps. The medicos couldn't diagnose the problem and fell back on the theory that perhaps it was colic! They had no medicines to offer so I had to suffer. That was when I met **Padre Noel Duckworth**. He was padre of the Cambridgeshire Regiment and I found out that he was a man of valour and great humility. He had stayed behind with a great many wounded men of his battalion saying that he would look after them. When the Japs overran the position, **Padre Duckworth** managed to prevent the Japs from killing the wounded men.

**Padre Duckworth** took it upon himself to succour and comfort me while I was in agony and I am positive that it was he rather than the small amount of medical attention I received that pulled me through the trauma of the illness. **Padre Duckworth** died in 1980 and it was my intention to locate his grave and pay my respects to a brave man of great stature. My mission was accomplished on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1998, when my wife and I and our friend **Joan** located **Noel Duckworth's** grave in a cemetery at the church in Riccal, Yorkshire.

The trials and tribulations of being a POW in Pudu carried on relentlessly, the Japs increasingly demanding more and more bodies for working parties, screaming and bashing their way amongst us. Interminably more parade 'Tenkos', and we all had to learn to count in Japanese, *Ich, Nee, San, Shee, Go* etc. so that they could establish our numbers with some degree of accuracy. They often kept us standing on parade while they checked and re-checked and sometimes treble checked if one of the stupid gits made a mistake. They would go through the sick bays to see if, in their estimation, any of the sick were in fact able to work. Many a poor lad was made to stand up from where he was lying, and if he could indeed feebly stand, then the chances were they would make him go out to the main parade. The Jap attitude was implacable and the meagre food rations were reduced for the sick and needy. A typical example of their way of thinking was when they had access to the contents of K.L. Cold Stores. They helped themselves to the contents and carcasses of meat in the stores when in good condition, but when the carcasses started to smell and go bad because of the lack of refrigeration, they decided as a gesture of good will and a face saving motion to present the meat to us with an exhortation to work harder! And they made quite an issue of it to boost their egos and asked us to acknowledge their magnificent gesture!

The British and Colonial attitude of fortitude in adversity came to the fore, and all that was possible to do for the sick and wounded was done by those chaps who were still relatively well and mobile. The best of the so-called rations were apportioned to the so-called hospital and patients. As the days and weeks wore on, the enormity of our situation settled down from being in great despair and anxiety, and the British trait of fortitude prevailed among us.

There were rumours, 'Boreholes', of various military actions in our favour, rumours of better treatment to come from the Japanese, Red Cross parcels in great quantity to be issued, though it didn't happen while I was in Pudu! Then we squeezed permission from our gaolers to organize concert parties and it was amazing the amount of hidden talent that came to the surface for the enjoyment of us all. The Japs, of course, had to insist on being present at our shows, but whether any of them understood or appreciated the talent show is debatable. Quite often our artists sailed very close to the wind in cocking a snook at them.

Sometime in June 1942, **Ted Elkan** and I discussed the idea of escaping from Pudu Gaol. **Ted** had been working from Kuala Lumpur before the war came to Malaya and had a large number of Chinese friends there who, he felt sure, would be willing to help him. I also had Chinese friends in K.L. from my days as an engineer with Western Electric. Our idea was to get out of the Gaol and to seek help from those friends to get to the west coast and be provided with a suitable boat with which to escape to India. Looking back now, it is perhaps doubtful whether we would have been successful, but for that period of time we seriously thought of and made plans for an escape from the gaol.

Also incarcerated in Pudu were other members of our 'Stay Behind' parties' grand gestures, including **Frank Vanrenen**, **Harvey, Sartin & Graham**. **Sartin** actually was a regular Sapper who had been with **Spencer Chapman** but had become separated on one of their forays and captured while trying to pass through a Jap checkpoint one night. Anyway, these stalwarts were also planning an escape from Pudu, unknown to **Elkan** and me. Their plan was to acquire or make a key that would open some of the essential doors and a gate in the perimeter walls. So when **Ted** and I learned of their intentions, we made a pact with them that we would make a break for it on the same night.

Before all these plans could come to fruition, the Japs decided that all POWs must sign a declaration that we would not attempt to escape. This was contrary to military law, it being accepted as our duty to try to escape if ever we were captured in wartime. To a man, we all refused to sign such a declaration, and we officers were confined to our cells and locked in. The other ranks also refused to sign, and the Japs uttered threats of dire punishment and were indeed bloody minded, but we still refused. In Singapore, unbeknown to us, the same thing was happening, and the POWs in Changi and Selarang Barracks were all kept out in the burning sun and endured beatings and bad treatment. Eventually the Senior British Officer in Changi issued permission for all ranks to sign under duress, which meant to us that the oath signing meant nothing. And so ended a

period of uncomfortable, life sapping and painful confrontation with the Japanese military.

It is not my desire or intention to portray the deprivation and horrors of being a prisoner of the Japs in K.L. Gaol, or the sickness and deaths of British and Colonial troops. Suffice it to say we drew on our reserves of will power and determination that we possibly didn't know we had. We learned to help and assist each other in our adversity and win through to tell the world what happened to us. The pity of it all is that the world doesn't want to know. The lessons of the past haven't been learned and taken to heart.

Our incarceration at Pudu carried on relentlessly. More and more working parties outside, more and more sickness and deaths for those unfortunate chaps who didn't have the benefit of proper medical attention and who didn't have the necessary physical and moral stamina to resist. Living through it all was a day to day effort of helping each other and continuously thinking of ways to outwit our gaolers. Out on working parties we did as little as it was possible to get away with without being noticed and punished. It was always the officers in charge of the working party who were walloped first, then the offender was punished on the spot, sometimes very severely. I once had to stand by after being punished while a Scots lad was brutally beaten with pick helms by six Korean guards. He had lost his temper while being harangued by the guards & had lashed out. If we were working among food stores and dumps, whenever possible we lifted what we could safely get back to the gaol for the sick and needy. And so life dragged on.

Then the inevitable happened. **Vanrenen** and his chosen group of like-minded officers did escape from the Gaol one night after roll call, and we managed to hide the escape for two whole days by juggling the numbers and positions on the roll parades before letting the Japs know that there were seven bodies missing. That really turned up the heat! We were kept standing on parade in the heat of the day while they checked and double checked and shouted, checked and bashed their way among us.

That happening put **Ted's** and my escape into jeopardy and cancellation. It had been planned and agreed that we would go out on the same night as **Vanrenen** and his group but, for some reason that we never discovered, they moved the date of departure forward and did not tell us.

The sequel to the escape came seven days later when they were all returned damaged and dishevelled in a lorry to Pudu Gaol. We saw them come in but were not allowed to speak to them or go near them, though we did find out that they had been betrayed by some Malays. Back in Gaol they were interrogated very roughly, and we saw the effects on them all. Then one morning we saw them all loaded onto a truck with several Jap soldiers and taken away. We learnt later that they had been driven to K.L. cemetery, made to dig their own grave, then shot.

**Ted Elkan** and I decided that the population was not now to be trusted and put our plans on hold as we were unable to make contact with any of our previous Chinese friends.

In early October 1942, the Japs decided to move some of us to Singapore, and for some unfathomable reason insisted that only so-called 'Colonial' troops were to go, which meant Australians, a few New Zealanders, an American or two and **Elkan** who had registered as a South African. **Ted** said to me 'Hey, **Bill**, you've spent some time in Canada, so call yourself a Canadian!' I did so, and found myself included in the group to move. It meant that **Ted** and I could stay together a while longer. While in Pudu, we had met up with our 'Stay Behind' chaps and had been able to compare notes of achievements [or lack of.] One of these was **Pat Garden**, a Kiwi. It was accepted in our discussions of the various actions that, in spite of **Spencer Chapman's** enthusiasm for the ideas that he propounded, the actual situations that eventuated nullified any attempted actions on our parts, and were in fact fruitless gestures that were impossible to execute because of lack of preparations and planning, and also that our system of trying to keep in touch with other groups and the main forces was non-existent. **Pat Garden** survived the camps, and I met him again many years later in 1962 in Wellington, New Zealand while attending an engineers' conference. He was unfortunately in a wheel chair and had suffered from polio, but he was fully *compos mentis* and a busy engineer. We were able to talk over our days 'in the bag' and derived much satisfaction that we were still alive and had busy lives.

In early October, **Ted** and I were en route to Singapore, again in railway wagons together with some two or three hundred others. We arrived in Singapore to be incarcerated in the Changi section of the POW camps. I was reminded of my idyllic military life there in 1936 to 1938, but now the barracks were bursting at the seams with ill nourished and ill treated soldiers, many of whom had given up hope of ever seeing their native land again. It was at Changi that I had at last the opportunity to have the bullet removed from my left elbow. I had learned to live with it in Pudu because of the lack of medial facilities. I was given an anaesthetic, and when I came to was presented with the bullet on a pad of cotton wool which I sadly lost along the way. Alas, our stay in Changi was of only a few weeks duration for the Japs wanted more bodies for work on the railway project in Siam. I found myself detailed to go in the large group ['U' Party departing 28.10.42] being assembled for Siam. **Ted** did not go with me this time. [Both returned to Malaya in 1946 but were never to meet again.] He was a staunch pal to be with and I missed not having him around.

Our journey to Siam was horrible. We were crammed into metal freight wagons with many sick among us, no toilet facilities and only three stops for food in five days of travel – cooked rice and watery vegetables dished out in a railway siding. We weren't allowed to detrain so it was a scuffle to get to the doors of the wagon to get a share of the food. At the end of the fifth day's journey we arrived at Ban Pong in Siam. It was pouring with rain, and after detraining we sloshed our way to a transit camp of bamboo huts with attap roofing. It was a horrible shock to us all. There were a large number of POWs there, many of them emaciated and sick, some wore nothing but the tattered remnants of their clothes and some wore g-strings. The smell was awful and we were pushed into various huts and left to fend for ourselves after some rough treatment from the guards. Our stay in **Ban Pong** was three days after which we were assembled and marched out in a party of some two hundred bodies, carrying whatever possessions we still had and also being compelled to carry stores for the guards as well as our own meagre uncooked food rations in bulk. Some chaps were struggling to carry a large cabin trunk labelled 'Medical Supplies'

with a Red Cross symbol – owned by a Major of a Volunteer unit. I discovered later that the trunk did not, in fact, contain medicine but was a cache of food for the Major: may his soul rot in hell for imposing his rank on those chaps to carry it for him from **Ban Pong** to well past **Kanburi**. And he was also the officer who went addressing the Japs, saluted them and said "Yes, Master!"

For me, a moment of trepidation occurred while we were having a rest stop on the way. Some Thais came over to have a look at us. One of them noticed that I was wearing a Siamese religious ornament around my neck and wanted to know why the Japs were holding a Siamese priest captive. Luckily for me, I understood what they were saying and when they turned away towards the Jap guard, I made haste to dispose of the thing, so that when they returned they couldn't determine who it was they had seen wearing the token. The item itself was a good luck charm I had had for several years not knowing that it had priestly connotations.

Fortunately for us the weather was clear, but the pace of the travelling was slow, and the guards decided to have a go at us in an effort to speed up the march. We moved on to **Kanburi**, rested a day or two and then following the terrain of the **River Kwai Noi [the Little Kwai]** we made our way slowly onwards. A couple of days later we were told to build a working camp and that became known as **Kanu 1** and the watershed of our endeavours, or so we thought at the time. We had to clear jungle and secondary growth from the already determined route of the railway and then the hard work really started! Working from early morning to late afternoon we would be pounding a sledge hammer to rock drills, splitting rocks and drilling holes for blasting, moving the spoil in bamboo baskets to make an embankment and a cutting for the route, and this went on *ad nauseum*, spanning ravines with trunks of trees cut from the forest around us and making trestle bridges to span the ravines. Our food on these working parties was a ball of cold cooked rice and an onion for each man! It is no wonder our casualties were so high.

On one occasion, I was working on a section close to where a trestle bridge was being assembled. One poor wretch caught the wrath of one of the Jap supervisors and was knocked off the structure and fell about thirty feet onto rocks below. He was severely injured and it took a bit of persuasion on our part to be allowed to recover the lad and carry him back to camp.

During the frantic building period it was "Speedo! Speedo!" and no thought on the part of the Japs for the welfare of the POWs. As one senior Japanese officer stated to a parade of POWs: "It doesn't matter how many die. The Railway will go through!" In the winter months we were working out from **Kanu** and the nights were bitterly cold. Not having any clothes or blankets, trying to sleep, tired and ill as we were, was virtually impossible. On many nights we used to light a huge bonfire of bamboo and forest debris and stood around it soaking up the warmth until nearly daybreak. In **Kanu** I contracted malaria and suffered 2 bouts lasting days at a time. I wasn't much use as a labourer during those bouts, but as the weather improved and became warmer, so my resistance to the bug improved and eventually I became a worker again for a while. At that time I made snares to catch lizards and snakes, anything to supplement our diet of rice and onions.

In the Spring and Summer of 1943, our casualties in **Kanu** camp reached a peak of 25 deaths a day through dysentery, malaria and suspected cholera, and also because of overwork and malnutrition. But then a miracle happened! The Thais started coming upstream with barges loaded with DUCK EGGS and fruit. We were able to improve our diet no end and the casualties started to go down somewhat. From then on we all said that a monument should be erected to the ducks of Thailand for coming to our rescue!

[To be continued in July.]

#### **HUGH LAWSON'S DIARY FROM 17<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 1942 TO 9TH OCTOBER 1943 – PART 2** By kind permission of Bob Davidson

[This part of Hugh Lawson's diary covers the period up to "The Double Tenth." The diary entries are exactly as he wrote them, although some days have been omitted if they contained repetitive entries.]

**1942**

#### **JOO CHIAT POLICE BARRACKS, KATONG CIVILIAN PRISON CAMP**

**Feb 17<sup>th</sup>** Entered above camp

From S'pore CC – Camp 6 mls. On foot. Approx 600 (here). 400 (Women's Camp Sultans Perak House) and at 7<sup>th</sup> mile.

#### **No. 13 SENR POLICE CONS QTRS**

Above qtrs allowed 7 persons as per sketch.

AREA = 198 sq. ft.

7 PERS = 198 sq. ft. therefore 1 PER = 28 sq.ft.

17 Bags = 17 x 180 lbs Rice = 600 PERS

Therefore 1 PERSON = 0.17 lbs per day.

Usual coolie daily allowance 1.33 lbs per day.

Therefore 1 PERSON = 2.7 ozs rice per day.

Clocks forward 1 ½ hrs to follow Japanese time.

Rev – 8.00 AM = 6.30 AM

Parade – 8.30 AM (Clean up) = 7.30 AM

Coffee or Cocoa (Only) 9.30 AM

Work 10 AM – 12 = 8.30 – 10.30 AM

Meal Time 1.30 PM = 12 Noon

Tea Only 5.30 PM = 4 PM : Cease Talking 11 PM = 9.30 PM : Black Out lights continued.

**GMT 9 HRS & 7 ½ HRS BEHIND**

**Wed 18<sup>th</sup>** Cleaning up camp

**Thurs 19<sup>th</sup>** Latrines

**Fri 20<sup>th</sup>** Sand bags

**MARCH 1942**

**Sun 1<sup>st</sup>** Cleaning up. Church Service,

**Tues 3<sup>rd</sup>** Cleaning quarters. 100 increase (700 persons)

**Wed 4<sup>th</sup>** General Parade (800 persons)

**Thurs 5<sup>th</sup>** Room and Latrines

**Fri 6<sup>th</sup>** Removed to Changi Prison 7 mls on foot. All personnel including Governor. 2500

**Sat 7<sup>th</sup>** Accommodated in workshops. Others 3 persons per cell. 30sq ft. person. No proper meals. Bully beef, sardines, bread, tea.

**Sun 8<sup>th</sup>** 10 AM tea. 2 PM Rice – tongue. 7 PM Scone-butter-tea. 100 Persons B Coy

**Mon 9<sup>th</sup>** All personnel in prison. Approx 2500 – 3000

**Tues 10<sup>th</sup>** Java surrendered. B Coy duty posts (4 weeks)

**Wed 11<sup>th</sup>** Fatigue duties.

**Thurs 12<sup>th</sup>** 4 & 8 PM Meetings of Engrs for employment outside prison.

**Fri 13<sup>th</sup>** Duty post at hospital washing clothes. 1 PM & 8 PM meeting of Engrs attended by Governor. Proposed to leave noon SAT.

**Sat 14<sup>th</sup>** Qualified engrs standing by at noon to proceed outside on special duty. Awaiting orders. Wgt 140 lbs. Lights out 9 PM = 7.39PM

**Sun 15<sup>th</sup>** Daily routine. Left Changi. 7.00 PM Tea. Arr. River Valley Road Evacuee Camp 8.30 PM Travelled by lorries (20 Persons per lorry – 6) 120. Attap top- and sided sheds suited to house coolies.

**Mon 16<sup>th</sup>** Awaiting orders re: engineering works outside. Food 9.30 Rice and tea. 2 PM Rice. 6.30 more rice and soup and tea. Lights out 9.00 PM.

**Tues 17<sup>th</sup>** Still awaiting orders. Roll call 8 AM. Party 20 persons working at Alex Hosp. Food 9 AM Rice – tea. 1 PM More rice. 6 PM more rice – tea.

**Wed 18<sup>th</sup>** Party 64 engineers remain to repair Alex Hosp. 49 Engrs voluntary return to Changi Prison 11 AM. Palace compared with swamp, mud and filth.

**Thurs 19<sup>th</sup>** No extra duties. Ordinary routine. Food normal camp rations.

**Sun 22<sup>nd</sup>** Duty roll drying rice. Registered on internees list. Porridge macaroni and cornflour. Bread & tea. Church service.

**Mon 23<sup>rd</sup>** No special duties. Hair cut. New Nippon command of camp. Kungi – Rice & stew – rice & fruit & tea. Lights out 9 PM

**Tues 24<sup>th</sup>** No fatigues. Inspected by new Nippon Command Officer. Usual daily food.

**Wed 25<sup>th</sup>** Duty Block C 1. Collection of rations outside. No lorries so postponed. Persons now 2900.

**Thurs 26<sup>th</sup>** Usual daily routine. Porridge 9 AM. Irish Stew – rice 1.30. Rice pudding – bread – tea. 6.30 PM. Obtained army blanket to sleep on.

**Fri 27<sup>th</sup>** Usual fatigues. Washing. Meeting to elect new Command. Lights out 9 PM. No noise 10.30 PM.

**Sat 28<sup>th</sup>** Duty Block incinerator. Registered 2900 internees. 6 bags rice – 3000 persons app. 6 ozs day. Porridge 9 AM Sausage & rice 1 PM. Savoury rice 6.30 PM. Coffee & tea 7.30 PM. Grand Concert.

**Sun 29<sup>th</sup>** No fatigues. Church Service. Rice Kungi 9AM. Rice and bully 1 PM. Pudding 6.30 PM Tea and Coffee.

**Mon 30<sup>th</sup>** Usual routine and food. Dysentery prevalent in camp. Two Plat No. 6 Sick with flu.

**Tues 31<sup>st</sup>** Fatigues duty. Cleaning food utensils (dust bins and kerosene tins). After meals Community singing.

**APRIL 1942**

**Fri 3<sup>rd</sup>** Good Friday. Firewood fatigue. Cigarette ration (Lion). War news good if correct. **HOLLAND?** Invaded by allies and taken. Tokyo bombed. Landing at St. Nazaire. Fresh meat for issue from B.T. store found putrid with maggots. Church service. Tin rations only.

**Sat 4<sup>th</sup>** Duty platoon medical inspection. Weekly Concert. Extra ration, one boiled egg with tea.

**Tues 7<sup>th</sup>** Fatigue platoon. Hospital – Laundry duty – washing blankets etc. Extra bread ration.

**Mon 13<sup>th</sup>** Cleaning rice (dust) bins and tea (benzene) tins after meals. Community singing. Block 3 Private Kodak cinema Cell 36 D 3Floor

**Tues 14<sup>th</sup>** Fatigue Coy. Firewood duty outside work 10 AM – 12. Ten days food rations supplied.

**Wed 15<sup>th</sup>** No fatigue duties. T.Parker reportedly dangerously ill with dysentery. Grand Concert. 7.30 Intelligence test. Competition.

**Thurs 16<sup>th</sup>** Usual daily routine. Kungi 9 AM. Rice – stew 1 PM. Rice Pud and jam 6.30 PM. 8 AM **Parker died**. 3 PM Burial of Parker. No coffin. Brother and R. Jones only mourners. Burial service by Dr. Williamson.

**Fri 17<sup>th</sup>** Washing up food utensils after meals. Lecture on dredging in Malaya.

**Mon 20<sup>th</sup>** Sundry articles sold from camp canteen supplied by S'pore firm – apprd by Nips. Bought towel, soap, blanket, toothbrush & cigarettes. Weekly concert in No.3 Yard.

**Tues 28<sup>th</sup>** Levelling ground for latrines. Usual rice diet morning, noon and night. Concert D Block.

**Wed 29<sup>th</sup>** Emperor of Japan's birthday. No fatigues.

[To be continued in July.]



**THE WARTIME DIARY OF DR. JOHN COUTTS MILNE – Part 1**  
**of the Malayan Medical Service – Lt. Col. No:3 Field Ambulance FMSVF**  
**by kind permission of his daughter Patricia Lewin**

After an apprenticeship of three years in a prisoner of war camp, I have the urge to put in writing the feeling of the present moment. Today, the fifteenth of February 1945 is the anniversary of that '*dies infesta*' – the fall of Singapore – the disastrous day that took all the prizes of life away from us.

With four friends, I live in a first floor end room in a two stories gaol warder's quarters, which by all camp standards is a palatial one. Some sixteen by twenty two feet in size with large windows facing north and south, it catches the prevailing winds. The five beds are so placed as to allow space for a card table and four chairs in the middle of the room. Criss crossing the room at picture rail level are numerous wires for supporting mosquito nets and airing towels and clothes. Alongside each bed is a hospital pattern three tiered bedside table, for each one's toilet and shaving kit, eating utensils, sugar, salt and red palm oil containers; under each bed suitcases and footwear. From my window, I have a view across the valley of the black flat roofed barrack blocks of **Selarang**, rigidly outlined against the horizon, to the right of them two high water towers. In the middle distance a diagonal scar shows the line of a new road deviation: in the near distance are some of the camp gardens: to the immediate right are the hundred metre attap roofed, split bamboo walled huts in use as a hospital; to the left the continuation of **Half Moon** street with the houses occupied by our guards.

From our back window, looking south, the horizon is shut in by a plantation of palm trees: on the right the high sombre walls and buildings of the gaol dominated by a tower whence proceed the clock chimes and bugle calls that make time of our eternity. Between our quarters and the gaol are nine rows of coolie lines occupied by senior officers, three to a room, and along either side of these lines are rows of wooden attap roofed huts housing other officers; there the view is limited by the line or hut in front, the last fronting on the incinerator.

I write now, lying in bed, after a midday meal, whilst the other occupants of the room endeavour to sleep despite the distraction from the noise of some troops cleaning up the road edges preparatory to an inspection by a high ranking Japanese officer. Three years ago all troops would have been lining the road for a couple of hours before the inspection.

I lie back and Zola-like indulge in a mild form of arithomania, counting and recounting the twenty four asbestos panels forming the ceiling. Now I feel I must think of something, even if only of our present existence; that this life is favourable to philosophical contemplation but that the absence of security detracts from viewing things with philosophical detachment. I recall that **Osbert Sitwell** once wrote that army life was a lottery in which the luckiest is he who draws a ticket whereby he must spend the best years of his life in an internment camp in an enemy country. **Sterne's** soliloquy on a visit to the Bastille better expresses my feelings, "*Disguise thyself as thou wilt, still Slavery thou art a bitter draught, and though thousands in all ages have been made to drink of thee, thou art no less bitter on that account.*" Small consolation is obtained by meditating on **Charles of Orleans** captured at Agincourt and kept prisoner for twenty five years: **James the First of Scotland** in prison for eighteen years: **Sir Walter Raleigh** twelve years in the Tower of those Gordon Highlanders captured in the Peninsular War in 1779 and not released until 1809.

Captivity while in progress is an undignified story, well likened by **Stella Benson** to illness, which at the time tactlessly involves being sick, being smelly, being colicky, and only in retrospect can be made picturesque by the labels, at Death's Door, the Crisis, Delirium and other prettinesses. Some of us consider it beneath one's dignity to sweep out a room. But dignity and prison camps do not go together. What dignity is there in carrying overflowing buckets of urine in our effort to emulate the Chinese method of growing vegetables. A few perhaps carry lack of dignity too far, collecting their evening meal at the messing point in the nude. The eyes soon get satiated with the view of the human form unadorned and even sooner when adorned with curious tattooing, a form of self mutilation I am unable to understand and which seems to give more interest to the beholder unless the tattooee, narcissus-like, is fond of gazing into the mirror.

How to lighten the tedium and boredom of existence, well expressed by **Swinburn** in his "*say at night would God the day were here, and say at dawn would God the day were dead.*" How apt and appropriate is **Gibbon's** description of monastic life in Egypt when "*even sleep, the last refuge of the unhappy was rigorously measured, the vacant hours of the monk heavily rolled along, without business or pleasure; and before the close of the day he had repeatedly accused the tedious progress of the sun.*" Here it is "*What is that all the time, surely you're wrong; another hour till meal time.*"

It is a truism to say that reading has tempered the wind of boredom to the prisoner shorn of civilization's amenities. In peace time reading may be the occupation of the leisured or frustrated and fiction provides people with the means of assuaging vicariously and in fancy their unsatisfied longings; here like the **Earl of Arundel** who spent ten years in the Tower we read so much lest we remember something, although many of us, like **Donne**, find it true that after long reading we can only tell how many pages we have read.

Our doorstep, where I sit most evenings, is the meeting place for Malaysians. Here gather regularly the Malayan

poker school before proceeding to their game upstairs. **Bunty**, a short elderly business magnate, well known by his repatriation talk and when clad on a wet evening in his big hat and cloak, reminds me irresistibly of what I picture **Barlath of the Guard** to have looked; **T.B.** tall, thin and elk-like in appearance; big boy **Duncan**, in build and tongue a burly Scottish farmer; **R.B.** short, stocky, always dressed in shirt and trousers and never without his pipe; **Doug**, an angular-faced black haired lowlander, always in touch with anything going on and knowing where to make the best contacts; **Max**, a grey haired **Poirot-headed** Celt, restless – bringing to mind **Chekhov's "his restless spirit seeks the storm as though in tempest there were peace"** – darting like a sparrow between his room and the laboratory, invariably chewing a pencil stub and swinging his spectacles by one of the limbs.

Our doorstep meetings remind me of **Barrie's** description of the informal club meetings at the pigsty on **Trowhead's** farm but we have no humorist of the standing of **Tammas Haggart**, though **Colin**, with his full face like a profile as **Heine** said of **Washington**, comes nearest with **Duncan** and **Phil** not far behind.

Unusual gaits are to be seen among the troops promenading in the evening in front of our doorstep. Some have a spring heeled jack manner of walking, others place the heel firmly on the ground first, one tall youth has a gait all of his own, moving his large splayed feet from the hips with knees rigid. In some cases disease, though with most, the kind of footwear, particularly locally made wooden or rubber sandals, accounts for the varying gaits. The regular soldier is characterised by holding himself too upright, even bent a little backwards and swinging the arms stiffly. All of us wear a rectangular tin plate with ideographic lettering indicating one's nationality and whether one is an officer or other rank. Some, however, endeavour to turn this regimentation into personal adornment by having a plate of aluminium. Dutch non-combatants can be recognized, almost from a low flying plane, by the size of the Red Cross brassard they wear.

Having had the fortune to have spent my youth on a lonely Aberdeenshire farm where in **Thomas Hardy's** words, **"configuity of itself amounts to a tacit conversation and silence conveys no sense of awkwardness"** I never acquired an adequate art of conversation. In camp this lack has been frequently impressed on me when I listen to lengthy conversations and discussions, harmonious and otherwise on all kinds of topics. The function of conversation is ordinarily regarded as being the exchange of ideas and information and my silence may be accounted for by a sense of the futility of exchanging ideas which are common to the speakers and are known to be so. Food and drink are never failing subjects of conversation, what one has partaken of in the past and will do so in the future. In conversation, the favourite response to many statements is **"that's interesting,"** possibly an unconscious expression that much conversation is uninteresting.

Mid March and our rice ration has been reduced from fifteen ounces a day for heavy duty workers to ten ounces and for others in similar proportion. Food prices in the canteen continue to rise, sugar eighteen dollars a pound, salt four dollars, even a cake of soap costs a dollar. We have now begun to collect snails and frogs when outside camp and find a dozen fried or stewed snails a welcome addition to the evening meal. I now go out as overseer to an anti-malarial oiling party, an equally essential but less interesting duty that surveying for mosquito larvae which I have done for the past two years. Close and frequent acquaintance with dogs in Chinese kampongs, whilst out on anti-malarial work, had given me a fellow feeling with **Robert Louis Stevenson** who records in his travels that **"to a tramp like himself, the dog represents the sedentary and respectable world in its most hostile form."** Nor, unfortunately, can kampong dogs be tempted to accompany one back to camp where they would be welcomed and quickly transformed into hamburgers, as has been the fate of most camp dogs.

Cats and snakes when obtainable are also used to supplement the diet; **Webster's** soldiers in Appius and Virginia with their **"and see the cat that lies a distance off be flayed for supper"** have nothing to teach us. Today I saw a water snake lying lethargically on the grassy edge of a fish pond with a cat fish in its mouth, the spines at the sides of the head having prevented the fish being swallowed. Both fish and snake were brought back to camp and cooked. As I write, snatches of conversation drift through from the next room where a discussion is going on as to whether our mess is receiving its fair share of vegetables. The word **"lagi"** is mentioned, **"lagi"** – Malay word for more – this or 'back-up' means food left over after everyone is served and which is then shared out in rotation. Any food served up other than as rice or stew is known as 'doeuvers or efforts,' and a meal is judged by the number of doeuvers served. Doeuvring is the popular name for any form of private cooking and facilities for this are much sought after, either by wood fire, oil stove or electric heater as can be scrounged or won; though oil is almost unobtainable and home made electric heaters readily break down. Springs from steel helmets have been found to be most suitable for use in electric heaters but these are difficult to get, all helmets having been officially handed in, in the early days.

The first week in May and a welcome addition to the diet is a twice weekly issue of food from Red Cross parcels in the proportion of one parcel to twenty men. My new American Red Cross shorts elicited from the Korean escort of the anti-malarial party the comment **"Roosevelton presento."** One seldom hears nowadays the remark that imprisonment has done many people good by removing the temptation of overeating and drinking. Confirming the popular impression that cook-house staff are the best fed in camp, I hear someone has been transferred to our kitchen to fatten him up before undergoing an operation.

At the moment, I am alone in the room cooking the supplement to our evening meal. On the small electric heater

is a pot of sliced unripe bananas, and near it a plate of already boiled tapioca root, on the floor a pan of boiled spinach grown in our garden patch, alongside a frying pan with some inferior quality curry powder, mainly ginger, which has been fried in palm oil; all to be mixed and finally heated as a stew. Palm oil, when obtainable, is two dollars a pint; most of us take a spoonful in the morning rice pap. Salt is unobtainable so sea water is now evaporated down to a strong brine solution.

Resting on the shore after completing the morning's anti-malarial oiling, whilst the party collected sea water, I enjoyed today the strong south west monsoonal breeze, watched a Malay boy skillfully extract worms for use as bait from the sand washed by the high tide, viewed the faint outline of the islands of the Rhio archipelago on the far horizon and thought of Malayan beaches I had known in happier times; Morib, Fort Dickson, Bacho. Why do coconut palms along the shore invariably lean towards the sea? Partly to erosion around the roots from tidal action but mostly by the light attraction being greater seawards.

An important camp industry is the making of grass extract for use in the prevention and treatment of certain vitamin deficiency conditions. On occasion I take the grass collecting party of twenty men and a trailer outside the wire. At 9 a.m. the Japanese escort arrives asking for the party, so I report as the officer in charge with twenty men. Stopping at the guard house, the escort reports our numbers and we proceed giving 'eyes right' followed by 'eyes front' as we pass and the guard commander returning the salute. We went our way leisurely to a grassy area near the shore, where the men cut with sickles a sackful of grass each, the escort and I sitting near the trailer meanwhile, where if he feels in the mood we converse in a mixture of English, Nippon-go and Malay. Staple topics of conversation are ones age, nationality, rank, whether one is married and how many in the family. At times, food prices in Singapore and camp are compared. When the sacks are filled and the trailer loaded, the escort may decide the party should have coconuts if such are available nearby or give the order – '*ikimasho*' (let us return) and off we set for camp, the escort accompanying the party back to the starting point.

Mid June and there are rumours of possible moves, parties already have been coming and going so we are now sun drying tapioca root from our garden and grinding it into flour to take with us if we are moved. **Hutch** who is doing the cooking at the moment has the windows on the windward side shut to prevent the breeze playing on the heater but has the door propped open to keep his bed cool. **Hugh** in his bed opposite the door vainly trying to sleep has twice got up and shut the door when **Hutch** has temporarily left the room; eventually **Hugh** gives up hope of sleeping and props the door open. Later when cooking is finished, **Hutch** offers to open a window and shut the door but **Hugh**, now reading in bed says, "**No, leave the door open.**"

It is now common experience that a person caught doing something without previous approval, such as collecting firewood, high jacking urine, and even more quarrels occur over the ownership of urine than anything else, never admits it is for himself but always on behalf of someone else, the more senior in rank the better. The caretaker of the church nearby asked me to bring in tapioca sticks to use as cuttings for the church, though I take it the church would not eat the tapioca grown.

And now I try to think of something intelligent to think about, but am only conscious of the rain outside, the cold wind coming through the half open door and a feeling of hunger although it is less than an hour since our midday meal of one small rice cake and a pint of sweet potato tops and water. Thoughts of meals I have had in the past arise unbidden. The pangs of hunger are not soothed by **Hutch's** habit of reading aloud descriptions of meals he comes across in books nor by **Max's** loud complaint of his craving for meat and his proposals for catching a dog which roams through the area after lights out.

In olden days before newspapers, the common greeting was "**What's the news?**" – so here it is "**What's the latest? Anything new?**" and the query, "**Is it from a good source or a senior officer?**" though why seniority should make for veracity when years and rank do not always bring wisdom but only immunity from risk when indulging in black market activities.

At times I am impressed or perhaps oppressed by the thought that I'm neither doing anything useful here nor improving myself, as so many are doing; learning languages, drawing, public speaking or studying scientific subjects. My reading I limit to books which occupy my mind and I lose in popularity in the room by not bringing in the lighter type of fiction.

On occasion I wonder why I trouble to write these notes but as **Philip Sidney** said "**better to write than to lie and groan**" and so I use my writing pad since its original function is deprived me, as a commonplace book, writing in it things that interest me. The writing pad bought in Singapore before the fall for sixty five cents, would now sell for twenty dollars for use as cigarette paper. **Hugh** is smoking through **Shakespeare's** complete works, though nipah palm leaves are on sale for cigarette paper but these are not so popular as leaves from books made of India or rice paper.

Ten in the morning and I sit on the small back verandah watching the passing world: a stretcher case being taken to hospital, most likely malaria: troops dressed or rather undressed in tattered shorts, wearing all varieties of headdress and footwear, busy watering the gardens: a trailer taking firewood to the cookhouse: a Japanese guard marching past medical officers going to their M.I. rooms; honest **Stan** jutting out his chest like the physical culturist he is: **Black Jack**, dressed as for parade, turning his head right and left to miss no salutes: .....

[To be continued in July.]

EXCERPTS FROM "NEVER A DULL MOMENT" – by Corry Iversen  
By kind permission of her daughter Ruth Iversen Rollitt

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 1941 the Japs attacked Pearl Harbour.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of December the order came suddenly that all European women and children had to leave the hills [**Cameron Highlands**] at once with only one suitcase which the wives could carry themselves if needed! Panic stricken, I called **Berthel** (my husband) who was out supervising a building and said I was not going without him. How could he manage without the car as he was still walking with two sticks and we did not have enough petrol coupons to send the car back for him? The District Officer at that time, a pompous chap, came to check if all women had left and was furious with me when I told him I would not leave my husband. He said that as I was "a foreigner" he might have to use military power to force me to go. **Berthel** also said I must leave, he would manage somehow. We had very little cash between us, as in those days all bills were settled at the end of the month by cheque, so I had to cash a cheque at our grocer's (he was also a contractor) who had a small shop in the village of **Tana Rata**. So, crying my eyes out and heartbroken to be leaving **Berthel**, I left. Our very nice Chinese grocer said I could have all the cash they had in the till although it was not much. He refused a cheque and he filled the car up to the brim with petrol and would not have any coupons for it. We could settle all those things later when the war was over! Our driver took us down the hill, and we stopped for lunch at the rest house at Slim River where the "boy" knew us well as we had often stopped there due to **Per** and **Ruth** being carsick, and our lunch there came to something like \$3.50. But he could not (or I felt would not) change the \$10 dollar note I had and said "Mem, you pay me later, when this is all over." Incidentally, when we returned after the war and I wanted to pay him, he laughed and said, "*Tida apah, Mem, we are old friends*" and would not accept any money. Neither would the grocer and his wife hear of any repayment. The Chinese were most kind and helpful all along the long journey to Singapore.

I had arranged with **Trine Timm** to meet at a friend's estate and from then on we travelled together to **Kuala Lumpur** where we stayed a few days with **Eric Madsen**, a young Dane working for the East Asiatic Company. But as he was getting married a few days later, we had to find another house and had luck in finding one in **Ampang Road** vacated long before, when the owners like we, left everything as it stood. It was now more and more difficult to get food but we had rationing cards, and I borrowed the temporary cook's bicycle and rode to the Cold Storage and market every day to buy food. **Trine** was expecting a baby and had to be careful and stayed behind looking after the children. Soon after, **Berthel** and **Jimmy** joined us, as all men had also been told to leave. **Jimmy** volunteered to join the army, **Berthel** tried too – but he was a cripple, who walked with two sticks. He tried to get a job – as a driver or anything that could be done with his bad foot, but he was turned down. We then started preparations for a sort of Christmas for the children's sake, even managed to find some Dinky toys etc., a pot plant had to do as a tree with some cotton wool and red ribbon and we had pilchards and cheese for dinner. We had to blackout of course and I cut up my very best and beautiful English black taffeta evening dress to cover a standing lamp in which we put the lowest voltage bulb. Some young Danes joined us and as **Berthel** had brought 2 cases of wine with him from the hill – there was plenty to drink. It was typical of **Berthel** to bring wine instead of our beautiful silver, but **Rameli** who was with us there had fortunately taken my table silver out of the canteen and put it in a kit bag - so we had that at least. (R.R. I was given that silver cutlery for my wedding in 1962 and have used it every single day since then!) While we were in the middle of having a quiet drink after our very spartan dinner, a car drove up and some one shouted: "Switch off that bloody light!" We got really embarrassed as we thought we had done our best and did not think anyone could see the faint glimmer of light from our lamp. In came a big fat European and a thin nervous young soldier, both British and lo and behold! The fat one shouted: "**Iversen**, what the hell do you think you are doing?" It was **Major Keys** – the architect **Berthel** had worked for until his firm went broke! So they had a couple of drinks and we offered them Snaps to try – a favourite Danish drink. **Keys** managed quite a few – he could take it, but the young soldier must have been pretty merry already as they were checking up on all houses and were offered a Christmas drink at most. When they left, the young man could hardly stand straight and hiccupped all his way out wobbling! We did not stay very long in Kuala Lumpur before we were woken up in the middle of the night by some Danes who yelled: "You must leave at once, the Japs have passed **Klang** already and are almost in **Kuala Lumpur**." They helped us take some pillows and blankets and put them in the back of the car, and carried **Per** and **Ruth** out in deep undisturbed sleep. We gave **Mejah** and the driver a few months salary and told them to go back to **Ipoh** and thanked them for having stayed with us. **Mejah** had even taken the children's silver milk mugs with her and had filled the thermos container, which we always had used for picnics, with rice, so that the children would have something to eat! Everybody was in tears. i.e. **Mejah**, the driver and me; **Berthel** as always kept calm and was such a comfort. We were not allowed to use the car lights so crawled along towards **Seremban**, but first

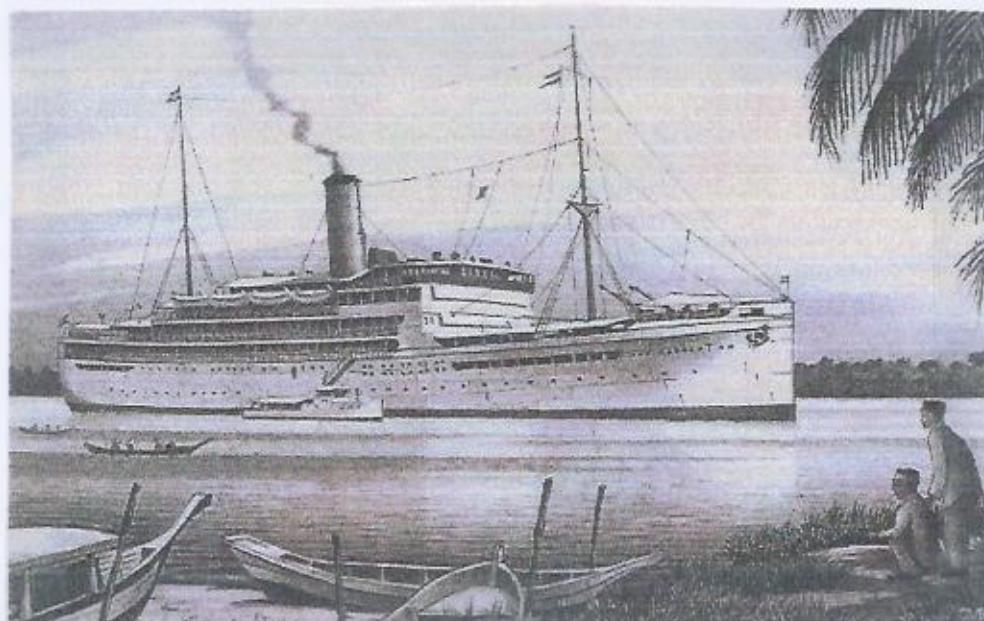
we had to drive several miles towards **K.L.** and that meant heading towards the Japs. Suddenly we hear shouts: "Stop" and saw shiny steel. I thought: "This is the end, here are the Japs." But it turned out to be European soldiers, who asked for our passports. One of them suddenly spoke in Danish and said: "Get moving as fast as you can, my wife is also Danish, she left long ago. Hurry, hurry, try to get out of here." What a relief - I could have kissed him. Daylight was not far off and driving at snail's speed we did eventually arrive at the Resthouse in **Seremban** - but it was chock-a-block full with evacuees. There was not even a chair for us to sit on. So we had to sleep in the car and I woke up later with my legs hanging out of the window and saw **Berthel** collapsing over the steering wheel! Fortunately, we could get some breakfast and **Per** and **Ruth** who had slept soundly could not understand why we were in such a crowded place! Where was their beloved amah, **Mejah**? Where were the other servants? We drove on to **Malacca** after hearing that our brand new house in the Camerons had been burnt down by the British troops to prevent the Japs from using it. **Berthel** did not want to drive along the main roads as all the other evacuees did ... and surely followed by the Japs, so he decided to take the coast road instead. We stayed at the Malacca Resthouse, which was so lovely, near the beach, and enjoyed being back where we had been so often before in happier circumstances. The food and the whole atmosphere in **Malacca** was exactly as it had been pre-war, or pre-trouble, I should say, and we had a heavenly normal time there, as **Malacca** was off the main road. But alas, the Nips were getting nearer and nearer and although **Malacca** was off the road where all evacuees were travelling, **Berthel** was wise in taking us there - it was a lovely break in all our worries. We moved on after five days heading for **Singapore** and when sitting in the car on an old flat bottomed ferry crossing the river at **Muar**, an old flat thing, the Japs came flying over us, many of them, many times - and there we sat like lame ducks in the middle of the river, a perfect target.

On arrival in **Singapore**, we went to the Danish Consul as it was almost impossible to find a hotel room or anywhere to stay, and he arranged that we could rent the house of a Danish couple who were on leave in Australia. It was fully furnished and very nice. A few days later two young Danes arrived and had to share with us - we knew them both. They had both volunteered to help and were instructed to go to the docks and destroy thousands and thousands of bottles of whisky, brandy etc. as the authorities feared that if the Japs came, the locals would get drunk and go amok. Therefore all these wonderful bottled had to be broken. When they returned from work at night, they reeked of alcohol and could no longer bear the smell and scrubbed themselves down to get rid of the stench.

There was an air raid shelter in the garden and we had to use it several times, both in the day and at night as the Japs were bombing **Singapore** a lot. **Per** and **Ruth** had welly boots and when the alarm went off at night they quietly slipped them on and almost sleepwalked to the shelter. One night when sitting there and playing "I see, I see, what you don't see" with them, a woman asked me if I were Dutch. That was **Els Nisson**, a Dutch girl also married to a Dane. They lived next door and shared the shelter with us. We became good friends and when she left for **Batavia** where her parents lived, she told us to ring her if we should get there. Her husband was a Volunteer, but he also managed to get away, and they were fortunate in being Danes and therefore never interned in **Java**. One day I met the Dutch Consul and he scolded me for still being in **Singapore** with my small children. I told him why and he said that **Berthel** could also come with us on a Dutch ship, which would soon be leaving for **Batavia**. And here follows a bit of fantastic luck. When **Berthel** went to the authorities again to volunteer to do anything, they said he should go to **Java** to build a hospital and quarters for the British Army and Air Force there! So all four of us could stay together, and we sailed on the very nice, though small, ship "**Plancius**" on February 6<sup>th</sup> for **Batavia**, the last Dutch ship to leave with evacuees. We had to be at Collier Quay at 12 noon and sat in a small launch on the water for several hours with Japanese planes flying overhead dropping bombs non-stop. It was terrifying! **Per** was not allowed to take his lovely Malaccan junk with him, the only toy now left was his little tin helmet which he adored, but when we were eventually allowed on board at 6 p.m., he left it behind in the launch in the hurry and confusion. He never forgot it! **Ruth** was just clinging to me all the time, did not even think of toys, all she wanted was to be safe on the big ship. When we got to our cabin we were amazed. They had given us two beautiful roomy ones, each with a bathroom, and the ship was only half full. We could not help feeling sad for the many people still left behind in **Singapore** waiting for a ship to take them to England. We had no choice. We were going to **Java**. From there we hoped to be able to go on to Australia. We had applied to go there and had sent £2,400 as a guarantee to the Chartered Bank in Perth, which would enable us to get a visa. The authorities were most helpful and allowed us 4 x £600 - although permission was only given to take £600 per adult - not for children. It was total madness: we had to leave all our valuables behind, jewellery worth more than \$500 too. Most women, however, kept their diamond rings. I left some gold chains and brooches behind in the bank in **Singapore**. We never saw them again; the Japs stole all the jewellery in some of the banks. I believe the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank was not looted - lucky those who had their possessions deposited there! **Trine Timm** and I had withdrawn whatever money we had in the Malayan Post Office Savings Bank and had had our bits and pieces of jewellery valued. She had inherited a lovely brooch from her grandmother, a straight pin with 8 gorgeous diamonds, I cannot remember what it was valued at -

certainly more than \$500 – and she naturally did not leave that behind! We nearly fainted when told the value, of which she had had no idea. The captain of our ship was ordered to stay in the convoy of 7 ships with which we left **Singapore**. The other six had mainly staff and material from the RAF on board. The convoy was to sail straight and fast to **Batavia**, but our Captain was an old expert on those seas and broke away from the rest and only sailed at night. During the days he hid between the many small islands. We left **Singapore** on the 6<sup>th</sup> February on the “**Plancius**,” the last Dutch ship to leave with passengers. In normal times it would take only a day to reach **Java**, but we did not arrive in **Tanjong Priok** until 9<sup>th</sup> February. **The other six ships of our convoy were never seen or heard of since.** The Japs had sunk them all. No sooner had we arrived in **Batavia** before they experienced their first bombardment and we felt we could just as well have stayed on in **Singapore**. **Batavia** was full of refugees, the hotels had no vacancies, and there was not room to be had. The passengers and crew of the “**Plancius**” were received in the hall of **Batavia’s** Art Circle and Dutch women who lived there gave us tea and sandwiches. They were very kind, but we felt very much like poor refugees. I remembered **Els Nisson’s** suggestion to contact her parents. It was 11 o, clock at night, but I rang the number she had given me. Her father answered the phone and told us to stay where we were, he would send his car and driver so there would be enough room for the four of us and all our luggage. All this consisted of was 2 suitcases and a kit bag! When we arrived at their house, the dining table was laid and dinner waiting for us, but we were too tired and too tense to eat a thing. **Els** had a sister who lived nearby, they also had two children and we were told we could move into their house and they would come and stay with her parents until we knew what was going to happen. The beds were made for us and everything looked bright again. The families **Burg** (parents) and **Van Regensburg**, and the sister could not have done more for us. We stayed there for 11 days, until we got a passage on a ship from **Tjalatjap** to ...? Nobody knew. We did not see much of beautiful **Java**, only the glimpses we caught from the train between **Batavia** and **Tjalatjap** – but it looked lovely. On the 20<sup>th</sup> February we left **Java**, again on a Dutch ship, (**The Jagersfontein**) thanks to an old friend of mine who was manager of the **Nederland Steamship Company** in **Batavia** who had found cabins for us. Once again the accommodation was splendid and the food totally pre-war luxury with many courses for dinner and lunch. **Per** got into trouble because he once again was experimenting with electricity and caused the lamp above the bath to fall down with a terrific bang. It smashed into 1000 pieces. Having been followed by a submarine everyone feared the worst and told **Per** that he had to go to the Captain and apologize. He did so bravely but the Captain frightened the daylights out of him when he told him never to do anything like that again or they would have to put him in a small rowing boat and drag him along behind the ship! I could have murdered the Captain for saying this, but saw that he was laughing and told us that we obviously had a budding electrician in front of us. We had about £50 sterling in cash and **Berthel** insisted on us having drinks with our meals - as always he reasoned that the money would be wasted if we were torpedoed! After sailing from **Tjalatjap** we had been followed by some Japanese ships but they did us no harm and disappeared, and the trip went smoothly and uneventfully, until we saw land early one morning. We thought it was **Perth** - the rumours had told us it would be, but one passenger said: “If that is **Perth**, I’ll eat my hat. That is **Melbourne!**” So it was. In due course we docked there. We saw many well-dressed people on the quay. They were very kind wanting to receive us poor evacuees and take us in their cars to wherever we had to go. We asked them to take us to any hotel.... [To be continued in July.]

#### THE PLACIUS



## INFORMATION EXCHANGE

### Inez Hollander of the Indo Project writes:

We want to make one thing very clear to our readers and supporters. We at The Indo Project ([www.theindoproject.org](http://www.theindoproject.org)) are not anti-Japanese. We are very supportive of Japanese journalist Takashi Uemera who recently wrote about the Korean sex slaves during the war and then was attacked by several factions in Japan for "fabricating" this issue. The Guardian recently published an article about continued censorship of the history of comfort women in textbooks by the Japanese Government. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/15/japan-urges-us-publisher-delete-references-comfort-women>

This incident shows that change needs to come from within but that change can only come if the Japanese government and school curriculum actively acknowledges Japan's role in the war, rather than denying or obscuring it.

We acknowledge that concepts of shame and honour are essential to Japanese culture and that censorship and denial may be rooted in wanting to prevent shame, but isn't there a greater shame to be had in not owning up to war crimes and a greater honour to be gained by acknowledging the sins of the past?

The first-through-fourth-generation victims who signed this petition want closure, but closure and forgiveness are put on hold while censorship prevails. We ask Emperor Akihito to be a role model for good to counter the many war crimes and evil that thrived under the reign of his father, Emperor Hirohito.

[Ed: Some members may have signed the petition which was initiated by the Indo Project, and sent out with the January newsletter.]

### John Penn writes:

I was interested to read of the MVG's current efforts to raise funds for the Muntok Museum. The MVG certainly has all number of ventures in hand which is most encouraging to see. As the years advance, one hopes there are young members who will maintain the interest, and keep the various causes alive. I have hit a brick wall so far as discovering the details of the McLaren's journey trans-Atlantic following the demise of the "Ulysses." I've written to a number of organizations in the States, the Red Cross being one example but not one has even replied. I had pinned high hopes on the Red Cross, due to their involvement with your collective care, following the sinking.

We (the Penn family) were on home leave from Hong Kong during the summer of '39. Upon the outbreak of the war in Europe, my father returned to HK whilst he could. My mother, sister and I remained in the U.K., where my sister was in boarding school. Following Dunkirk, my father felt we should make our way back to HK, and with the Suez route closed, we went trans-Atlantic to Montreal in June '40, then across Canada by train and arrived in Vancouver just in time to hear the evacuation of European dependents from HK had commenced. So we couldn't proceed on. We remained in BC (Victoria) till mid 1942, and then moved east to Toronto, as my mother wanted to get back to the UK, because my grandmother was quite unwell. Any chance of proceeding on to HK had, by then, evaporated. No chance of passage from Vancouver to the UK, but a better one from the East Coast. We eventually got passage on a ship called the "Baltrova" (built in 1913 & a surface speed 9 knots!), and sailed at the end of 1943, in convoy, to Liverpool. Quite an eventful trip!

Whilst the evacuation of HK was enforced mid-1940, nothing actually happened, of course, 'till December 1941. This caused a great deal of irritation to those forced to evacuate. My father was in the HK Volunteers, and Captain i/c No:1 Company. He had two very fortunate pieces of luck. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> December, he was shot, it is thought by a sniper, through the face. This in itself wasn't lucky! BUT he was yelling at someone and had his mouth wide open, and the bullet entered his right cheek and exited through the left, without touching tooth nor tongue! That was the first bit of good fortune. By that time they were on the southern side of the island and he was taken to a field hospital in St. Stephen's College, Stanley. On the 24<sup>th</sup> December he discharged himself, swathed in bandages, and returned to his company, the remnants of which had been withdrawn to Stanley, as part of the final defence, prior to the colony's surrender.

The Japanese forces entered the field hospital on the morning of Christmas Day, bayoneted virtually all the injured, raped/killed the nurses and shot the doctors who endeavoured to protect the nurses. To have self-discharged himself on the 24<sup>th</sup> was his second bit of good fortune. He spent the remainder of the war as a POW in the Sham-Shui-Po and Argyle St. Camps, stayed in HK to get the office up and running again following the Japanese surrender, and returned to the UK on the 19<sup>th</sup> December 1945.

My father and mother returned to HK in 1946 and my sister and I remained in the UK in boarding school. After I left school I got a job in London with a view to a HK posting and went out to the colony at the end of 1953. We were posted to Sydney in 1970 and I have been in Oz ever since – but return to the UK on 'home leave' regularly. I was a member of the HK Volunteers for 8 years and belong to the Sydney Association of HK Volunteers/ex-POWs – a few of whom are still alive.

### Ruth Iversen Rollitt writes:

My cousin Dougal (now 82) recalls his time in the Sime Road Internment Camp as follows –

"In Sime Road, Dad and I were in Hut 120 Camp D. I was 11 when I joined Dad, as I was with the Women before that – being under age. The hut was a long one with some camp beds or hammocks. I don't remember pillows. Each Camp A,C,D were for men. Camp B was for women as I recall.

Camp D had a school on Mon; Wed; Fri for one group, and Tue; Thu and Sat for the other. Just my luck that the Director of Education D.R. Cheeseman was a good friend of Dad, and I also acted on occasions a message boy for the Elders. There was a Field Hospital for the whole Camp to treat I know not what and 1 kitchen per compound. We had rice and tapioca – how I hated tapioca. In all the time we were in Sime Road I received 2 Red Cross Parcels shared with another person, not Dad, as the men had English Parcels and mine was American. Needless to say, Dad had my smokes – Lucky Strikes."

## PHOTOGRAPHS

Cameron Highlands School  
1939 – 1941



Centre – Michael Gibson

Does anyone recognize any of the other boys?  
Thanks to Jill Gibson for sending in this photo.

## Selangor battalion – 2/FMSVF



Back row L to R: Jack Bird; Alec Bird; –; –; J.Abbott; –; H.Mote; –  
Middle Row L to R: Ronnie MacArthur; R. Stonehewer; –; –;

2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Philip Paxton-Harding; Alfred F. Long;  
Richard O.J. Coppage; Ian Murray

Front Row L to R: –; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. John B. Mackie; Capt Charles Mummery;  
CSM Osborne (Coldstream Guards Instructor); – –

Thank you to all who have sent in names and corrections.

## BOOKS

**“Don’t Know Where, Don’t Know When.”** By Dr. Malcolm Read, MVG member. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of his novel based on his true family history. Details of the 1<sup>st</sup> edition given in Apa Khabar 35 – July 2013. ISBN 978-178-299-3711 Available on Amazon, Kindle and *feedAread*. It has 5 star reviews on Amazon – one of which says:

*This is not just another Japanese POW story. It is a son’s story of a long search for his father’s fate and his mother’s sacrifice. It is well researched and sets the English social scene before and after the Fall of Songapore. It is very moving and at times heart rending.”*

**“SINGAPORE MUTINY.”** By Mary E Brown and Edwin A Brown. Published by Monsoon Books [www.monsoonbooks.com.sg](http://www.monsoonbooks.com.sg) ISBN 978-981-4625-05-0 and also an e-book. Published to mark the centenary of the Singapore Mutiny.

It tells the story of the Brown family who were caught up in the Singapore Mutiny in 1915, and later in the Fall of Singapore with its disastrous consequences. Barbara Brown was 3 in February 1915, and old enough to be aware of anxiety amongst adults around her, and of hasty journeys to board a ship in Singapore Roads which went nowhere. Her parents, Edwin (EAB) and Mary (MEB) had the foresight to write an account of these times for her, and EAB describes in an accompanying letter how he finishes transcribing their notes whilst sitting in the deckhouse of a cargo ship returning home nearly 10 years later. As a then-Captain in the Singapore Volunteers it fell to EAB to play an important part in the quelling of this Mutiny. He describes events in a compelling way, to the point, and with some hints of humour in what were clearly worrying times. Whereas his story is one of almost continuous military activity, that of his wife, Mary, is of days of boredom punctuated by periods of excitement. Both give homely details of colleagues and friends, and of their reactions to the unfolding drama. In one of 3 forewords to this first publication, Barbara’s daughter Celia Ferguson tells the extraordinary latter history of this handwritten account, of its presumed loss after the fall of Singapore and subsequent re-appearance. She also usefully places this event in the history of the Brown family in Singapore in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a history sadly far more marred by WW2. In particular, Mary, a refugee afloat in 1915, was again aboard a ship, the ill-fated *Vyner Brooke* in 1942, and died in Muntok in January 1945.

While both the Browns’ accounts are basically restricted to their own memories of the events, the two other forewords, by Prof. Brian P. Farrell and Nigel Barley, provide much useful military and political backgrounds to this story and its aftermath. Full marks must go to the publisher Phil Tatham for gathering all this information into one most readable volume.

EAB later published **“Indiscreet Memories”** memoirs of his first 5 years in Singapore, which was republished by Monsoon Books in 2007. [Ed: This is available at the Changi Museum bookshop.] In his foreword to that volume he fears that ‘it will be of interest to no one but my own immediate relations.’ He need not have feared, for now the true value of such accounts in painting a full picture of life beside the formal histories is being appreciated by a wide audience.

**“CAPTIVE MEMORIES.”** By Meg Parkes and Geoff Gill. Published by Palatine Books. RRP £12.99. Special price for advance orders – £11 plus free postage in the U.K. To be launched in Liverpool on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2015. For enquiries about the launch and orders for pre-publication copies, please contact Carnegie Publishing on 01524 840111 or e-mail: [marilyn@carnegiepublishing.com](mailto:marilyn@carnegiepublishing.com) or write to: Carnegie Publishing, Chatsworth Road, Lancaster LA1 4SL.

The book charts the experiences and long term perspective of 66 former Far East POWs as well as 11 wives, widows and others. The men, aged between 85 and 98 years old, represent all services, ranks and all areas of captivity & were interviewed for an oral history study commissioned by the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) – the oldest such institution in the world. The interviews became the basis of Meg Parkes’s MPhil study, *“Life, Health and Social Issues for Far East Prisoners of war, 1942-1945.”* And it is from this that **Captive Memories** is drawn. The study ran in conjunction with the



Imperial War Museum's Sound Archive where a set of the interviews is held.

It represents the culmination of over 6 decades' involvement with FEPOWs by staff at LTSM. From early 1946 to the present day, LTSM's association with FEPOW veterans – their health, welfare and history – represents the longest collaboration partnership in the Tropical School's history. This unique relationship is at the core of *Captive Memories*.

[N.B. Meg Parkes MPhil is an honorary Research Fellow and Geoff Gill MA, MSc, MD, FRCP. DTM&H, is Emeritus Professor of International medicine, both are based at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine.]

**"IVERSEN, ARCHITECT OF IPOH AND MODERN MALAYA."** By Ruth Iversen Rollitt. Book now being launched in Penang, Ipoh, K.L. and Singapore. The U.K. launch takes place later this year and details of the book will be given then. The book tells the story about **Berthel Iversen's** arrival in Malaya, his and his family's evacuation during the war and his return post-war to the country he loved. It is based on hundreds of photos of his buildings, his letters home and pages of his 'Unfinished' – a book of drawings he made for my mother each year and excerpts from my mother's memoirs. It will be of interest to many – to architects and historians and people who have and still live in Malaya.

[Ed: Excerpts from Corry Iversen's memoirs can be read on Ps. 20-22].

**"DISASTER IN THE FAR EAST 1940 – 1942. The Defence of Malaya, Japanese Capture of Hong Kong and the fall of Singapore."** By John Grehan and Martin Mace. A Pen & Sword Publication. ISBN 978 1 78346 209 4 U.K. Price £30 In detailing this disaster in the Far East, the objective of this book is to reproduce the official dispatches of the Allied commanders, Percival, Brooke-Popham and the two Maltby brothers – as they first appeared to the general public some seventy years ago. They have not been modified or edited in any way and are therefore the original words of these commanding officers describing, and explaining, how they saw things at the time.

**"JUDY. A DOG IN A MILLION. The Heartwarming Story of WW2's Only Animal POW."** By Damien Lewis. Published by Quercus. ISBN 978-1-84866-536-1

Judy, a beautiful liver and white English pointer, and the only official animal POW of WW2, truly was a dog in a million. Whether she was dragging men to safety from the wreckage of a torpedoed ship, scavenging for food for the starving inmates of a hellish Japanese POW camp, or by her unbreakable spirit bringing inspiration and hope to men living through the 20<sup>th</sup> century's darkest days, she was cherished and adored by the British, Australian, American and other Allied servicemen who fought to survive alongside her.

After the war she was awarded the Dickin medal – the Animal V.C. Judy's unique spirit blended courage, kindness and fun, repaying that honour a thousand times over. Her incredible story, told using the testimonies of the last few veterans who knew her, is one of the most heart warming and inspiring tales you will ever read.

#### OBITUARIES

We send our sincere condolences to **Ivan Ho** and his family on the loss of his beloved wife **Madam Carol Ho** who died peacefully on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2015.

**LEE KUAN YEW 16<sup>th</sup> September 1923 – 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2015.**

We send our sincere condolences to all our Singaporean members on the death of Singapore's Elder Statesman aged 91. He was the creator of modern Singapore and the outstanding Asian Statesman of his generation. He was a brilliant scholar, and became Prime Minister, aged 35, in 1959, under the last British Governorship. He led the Island to independence as part of Malaysia in 1963 and then as a nation in its own right in 1965. Stability and economic progress were more important for him than the western notions of 'freedom' and he was criticized for being ruthless to opponents. However, his austere rule turned Singapore into an 'Asian Tiger' with the 9<sup>th</sup> highest per capita income in the world. He was a very remarkable man. His full obituary can be read online in the Daily Telegraph or The Times.

The death of **Lieutenant-Commander Con Thode** on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2014 aged 103 was reported in January this year. A New Zealander, he was the only officer in the NZ Naval Volunteer Reserve to command a submarine. After his training in various submarines in the Mediterranean, in 1943, he took command of H-33 built in WW1. After an inauspicious start, (his submarine slipped its moorings in the River Foyle) he was sent as "spare" Commanding Officer to Malta, but after recovering from a bout of ill health was given command of the *Scythian* a new submarine. He was later deployed to Ceylon and undertook patrols off Burma and in the Strait of Malacca. He sunk various small Japanese freighters & fought small warships and hunted for the Cruiser *Haguro*. The war ended as he was about to land a clandestine party on the coast of Malaya. He was mentioned in dispatches, and in retirement spent many years enjoying his lifelong passion for sailing, receiving an OBE. We also report the death of **Squadron Leader Doug Nicholls** aged 95. He flew Hurricanes in the Battle of Britain and was then sent to the Middle East in 1941 with 258 Squadron just as Japan attacked Pearl Harbour, and they were sent on to Singapore on the *Indomitable*. They flew to Batavia from the ship to refuel, & then back to Palembang where he was attacked in the air and had to bail out. He managed to get back to Batavia where, on the turn of a card, he was chosen to be evacuated with 258 Squadron to Ceylon. In April 1942 he was one of those who helped to repel a determined attack by the Japanese from aircraft carriers, and the island was saved but at a heavy cost of Allied aircraft & men. He had a distinguished career in Burma again with 258 Squadron and was awarded the DFC. Later in the war he played a key role in the air offensive in the Arakan. Post-war he became a teacher in the U.K., Uganda & Botswana. He died in December 2014. Canadian **Squadron Leader Bob Johnson** who has died aged 96, also had a distinguished career in Burma, and managed

to escape the attentions of the Japanese for 23 days after his Hurricane was shot down over the Irrawaddy River. For his heroism he was awarded an MC 'for bravery and resourcefulness during his escape.' During his days on the run, he had to kill a Japanese soldier or be killed himself, saying later he did not enjoy the business of killing, but "You had to. And because of the way the Japanese treated our people, I was really kind of glad to do it." He died in October 2014.

**CHARLES ARTHUR MAINWARRING EDWARDS. 2/19<sup>th</sup> Battalion AIF. 1<sup>st</sup> April 1918 to 27<sup>th</sup> December 2014**

Charles Edwards, an ex-prisoner of war of the Japanese, survived a mild heart attack in late November 2014 but succumbed a month later to the severe pneumonia that set in afterwards. He would have turned 97 on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015. Charles had a quirky sense of humour, always claiming that his date of birth bestowed upon him immunity from April Fool's jokes, although the joke was probably on his gullible children who believed him. Charles, the second eldest of five children, was born to Arthur and Rose Edwards in the tiny Victorian border town of Tintaldra on the Upper Murray. Arthur cultivated a market garden five miles out of town. Young Charles and his older sister rode a horse to school. When the old horse could not carry a third child, the family moved into the town. Arthur took up work for a large landowner, receiving some of his payment in meat, eggs and milk, as well as maintaining his own vegetable garden. Thus, despite the severity of the Great Depression, the family ate well and thrived. However, the education of the keen schoolboy who wanted to become a teacher was curtailed by the harsh economic circumstances. He was forced to leave school at the age of thirteen, after gaining his Merit Certificate at the end of Grade 8.



Charles took up an apprenticeship in the little Tintaldra bakery. By the time war broke out, he was working in Wagga Wagga in NSW, joined up from there and was enlisted in the 2/19<sup>th</sup> Battalion. Shipped to Malaya after basic training, Charles was one of the first eleven Australian soldiers captured by the Japanese as they advanced down the Malayan Peninsula. Wounded prisoners who could not walk were killed. The rest were taken behind the Japanese lines to Kuala Lumpur and held in Pudu Gaol, which became severely overcrowded by the influx of prisoners of war. Squalor, starvation and tropical diseases prevailed. From there, Charles was sent to the notorious Thailand-Burma Railway, a new supply line the Japanese were intent on carving out of the jungle. The prisoners were treated as slave labour, endured appalling living conditions, starvation and brutal atrocities at the hands of the Japanese guards. At Hellfire Pass, the most notorious section of the line, which had to be cut through sheer rock, Charles was once ordered to lift a rock. He found the task physically impossible and was thrashed around the hips with a sledgehammer. His life was saved by the courageous intervention of a sergeant who stepped in to stop the bashing. Later, it took six men to lift that particular rock. It is still there to this day. From the railway, Charles was taken to Changi Gaol in Singapore for about six weeks. There, the men were sorted and he was amongst those selected for shipment to Ohama in Japan, where a black coal mine ran out under the sea. Because Charles was a baker by trade, he was set to work in the kitchen, from where, extraordinarily, he saw the flash of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Charles' account of this event will be recounted in his own words in the next newsletter. Charles always attributed his survival to good mates, good officers and a lot of good luck. He had many hair-raising anecdotes about good luck saving him from close shaves with death. However, he possessed many fine qualities of his own, forged during his upbringing throughout the Depression. He had an iron will, immense self-discipline, an indefatigable capacity for hard work and an ability to make the best of any circumstances in which he found himself. He was stoic and did all he could to help himself survive. For example, he bathed his tropical ulcers in water as close to boiling as he could stand. When the Japanese threw food scraps in the river, Charles later dived for them, cut out any edible pieces and boiled them up. After the surrender of the Japanese, the pitifully emaciated men were shipped home on an American hospital ship. At the Melbourne Cricket Ground, where the Red Cross had organised for the repatriated soldiers to be reunited with their families, Charles first laid eyes on Ella May Nichols, the pretty sister of one of his mates, who was to become the love of his life. The two married in December 1947 and had their 67<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary two weeks before Charles died.

Charles and Ella settled in the outer eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Charles resumed his trade as a baker, needing to earn money too urgently to be able to take advantage of any courses of study offered to returned soldiers that would have enabled him to resume his truncated education. Besides, he said, "his concentration was shot", one of the few indications that hinted of the post traumatic stress disorder from which he undoubtedly suffered, as did so many of the other men. Only Ella really knew of the nightmares that afflicted his sleep. During the last four weeks of his life in hospital, Charles was tormented by the same nightmares, waking up once feeling as if he had been shovelling rocks for the Japanese for twelve hours.

A devoted family man, Charles always juggled a second job around his shift work as a baker in order to provide as best he could for his family. Thanks to his diligence, he created a modest but comfortable life for his family of three children, Alyson, Pamela and Phillip. He and Ella were prudent in their handling of money and thrifty in their needs and personal spending. Charles didn't smoke, drink or gamble. He was renowned as a handyman extraordinaire, who could make or mend anything. With his reverence for education, Charles encouraged and supported all of his children to achieve to their utmost in school, and was immensely proud that they all entered tertiary study.

Charles was never idle. Methodical and meticulous in any project he undertook, he collected stamps, building a valuable album, was a keen vexillologist, with flags for many national days, all flown on the appropriate date, loved word games, riddles and crossword puzzles and was a very constant gardener. Both he and Ella were endowed with remarkable green thumbs and created beautiful gardens, including vegetable patches and fruit trees, in each of their four homes. Charles habitually whistled tunefully while he worked, albeit with such piercing volume that he sometimes annoyed his neighbours. Charles and Ella saved enough to travel overseas three times, visiting England, Europe and Thailand on their way home,

walking along Hellfire Pass. They travelled to Jordan (where their son Phillip was conducting an archaeological dig). Later they visited Thailand a second time for the opening of the Museum at Hellfire Pass. Under the auspices of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, Charles flew to Hawaii for the commemoration of the signing of the surrender document on the battleship Missouri and attended the site of his capture at Parit Sulong for the commemoration of the Battle of Muar, an experience he found highly emotional. In 2013, at the age of 95, Charles undertook a Japanese government-sponsored friendship programme to Japan, including Ohama, with one of his granddaughters, where he at last felt he put his wartime experiences to rest. In his retirement, Charles took to heart the words of Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop, the revered camp surgeon, who urged veterans to reverse the advice they were given after the war to forget it all, and urged them to educate others about the true horrors of their experiences. Charles dedicated himself to this cause, establishing an extraordinary number of contacts, with whom he corresponded with his customary diligence and attention to detail. His recall was graphically vivid and he was often able to fill in gaps in the historical knowledge of others who yearned to know more about the experiences of their family members. He talked to primary and secondary children. He gave interviews unstintingly. He drew maps of the railway and other places of interest, such as a carefully paced-out plan of Pudu Gaol and copied them for anyone who asked or expressed an interest. Once, Charles walked into the Victoria Barracks and asked the Officer in charge if he might like a map of the Thailand-Burma Railway. The Officer all but scoffed, telling him that they already had an excellent map, thank you – then led him in to view a copy of Charles' own painstakingly hand copied map hanging on the wall. Charles was a humble man, without any particular rank in society and without any of the letters or qualifications following his name by which society usually evaluates success. However, he was far from an average Aussie bloke. Blighted as his hopes and dreams were by the great Depression and the hardships of war when he was a young man, Charles became something of a scholar, historian and teacher that he had once hoped to be.

Charles rejoiced in the love of family. He often attributed his long and happy life to the wonderful care of his cherished wife. He was beloved and deeply respected by his three children, eleven grandchildren and fifteen great grandchildren. Steadfast as a rock in their lives, he set a shining example of a good life well-lived. As he lay dying, Charles told his family that he had had a wonderful life. He truly meant it. He was a remarkable man.

[With thanks to Alyson Archibald – Charles' daughter]

#### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

##### MONDAY – 11<sup>th</sup> MAY 2015. Annual Gardening Day at the NMA.

Please come along if you would like to help with tidying up the Memorial Garden, & bring a picnic lunch with you.

##### SUNDAY – 17<sup>th</sup> MAY 2015. Annual Memorial Service at Wymondham FEPOW Church

We are grateful to **Merilyn Hywel-Jones** who is attending this service and has organised the wreath which she will lay on behalf of the MVG with **Jill Smallshaw**. Tickets can be obtained from: [administration@wymondham-rc-church.org.uk](mailto:administration@wymondham-rc-church.org.uk) The service starts at 12.30 p.m. and is followed by a buffet lunch in the church rooms.

##### FRIDAY to SUNDAY – 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> June 2015. Researching FEPOW History Conference in Liverpool.

We look forward to meeting MVG members at the Conference. Details will be sent out when we receive them.

##### SATURDAY – 15<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2015. 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Service for V-J Day in the NMA Chapel at 12 noon.

Details about the Service and Buffet Lunch are given in the enclosed leaflet. Please read the information. Admission to Pod 3 of the marquee will be by ticket only. If you wish to attend the service and lunch, please return the tear-off slip with your payment of £15.50 per person for the lunch. Coffee and biscuits will be available in Pod 3 of the Marquee at 11 a.m. where MVG members can meet before the service. To date there has been a disappointing response to this event.

##### SINGAPORE – September 2015. 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Signing of the Japanese Surrender in Singapore.

Please read the enclosed leaflet which gives the details and costs of the events which the MVG is arranging in Singapore. It is very important to have the numbers attending each event so that we can book coaches to accommodate everyone, and order sufficient places for the buffet lunch after the unveiling of the Sime Road Plaque. We request payment with your booking – to **Rosemary** in the U.K. to **Elizabeth** in Australia and to **Andrew** in Malaysia and Singapore.

##### SATURDAY – 24<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2015. Annual London Reunion and Luncheon at the RAF Club, Piccadilly.

We are sad to report that **Anton Rippon** is unable to continue as lunch secretary. In due course, therefore, bookings and payment will be done in the usual way through **Rosemary**. Details about the lunch menu, cost and talk will be given in July.

##### THURSDAY – 5<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2015. Cross Planting Ceremony and Service at Westminster Abbey.

A reminder to book tickets with **Merilyn Hywel-Jones** will be given in July, if you wish to attend the Service and Ceremony. The MVG's 8 inch black cross will again be planted by **Merilyn** in the FEPOW Plot. We thank the Revd. Pauline Simpson, who is Padre to the FEPOW Fellowship Association, for giving us permission to plant our cross in the FEPOW Plot.

##### SUNDAY – 8<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2015. Remembrance Sunday Service at the Cenotaph and March Past.

This marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ending of WW2. No doubt there will be a great demand for tickets, so please book early.

#### SUBSCRIPTIONS

**ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE!** We have kept the rate at £20 sterling for **U.K. and overseas members** (payment in your own currency). If paying by standing order, please make sure that you have instructed your bank to pay the correct the amount. Payment may also be made by BAC transfer – see details on leaflet. Cheques should be made out to:

**Mrs. R. Fell Malayan Volunteers Group [& sent to the address on P.27]**

**Australian members** – please pay **Elizabeth Adamson** in Australian Dollars as advised by her.

**Malaysian & Singaporean members** – please pay **Andrew Hwang** in Malaysian Ringgit or Singapore Dollars as advised.

Please pay promptly – and before the new list of members is compiled in July.

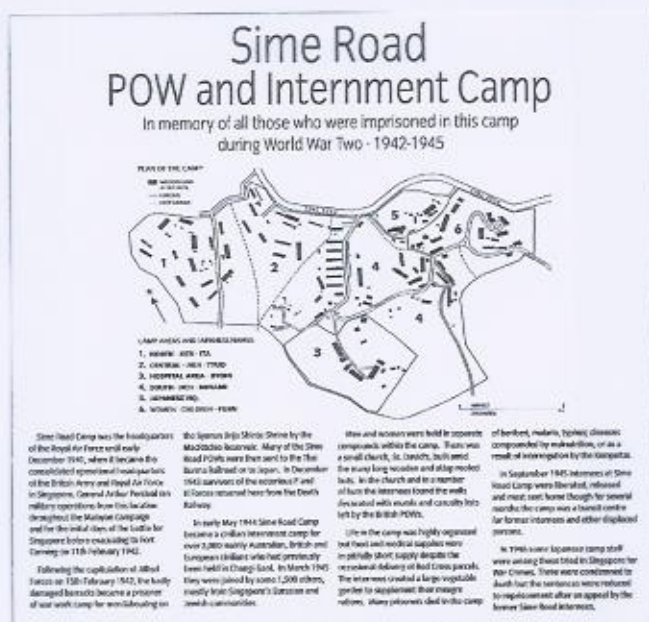
## SIME ROAD MEMORIAL

The final design for the Sime Road Plaque is shown below. It is to be placed on the outside wall of the Changi Museum at the entrance to the Bark Café, and next to the bronze plaque showing the Changi area during WW2 with the POW camps.

The original idea of mounting 2 separate plaques on a plinth had to be changed because of the difficulty of locating a suitable site in the area of the former camp itself, and maintaining it. The map and text have now been put together, and the plaque made in bronze relief. We feel that it looks very professional and we thank **Jane Nielsen** for all her work in researching the camp area, and drawing up the map in a form in which it can be made in bronze.

We are pleased that it will now be sited at the Changi Museum and grateful to **Jeya** for giving permission for this. The chosen position will mean that people visiting the Museum will see it and we feel that the civilians who were interned in Sime Road will also be remembered along with the POWs.

The Plaque will be unveiled at 10.a.m. on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> September. Details are given in the enclosed leaflet.



## ANNUAL SERVICE IN PERTH WA 14/2/15



Members of the MVG, Service personnel and friends collecting at the City of Stirling Memorial Gardens before the Annual Service of Remembrance.

Left to right:  
**Sheena Wheeler and husband, Judy Balcombe, Rosemary Fell and a former member of the Armed Services.**

## WEBSITES TO VISIT.

<http://janus.lib.cam.ac.uk/db/node.xsp?id=EAD%2F0115%2FRCMS%20103> - online catalogue to the Archives of the British Association of Malaysia held by the Cambridge University Library. From 31<sup>st</sup> August 2017 it is hoped that the archive will be freely accessible online via the Library's Digital Library platform - <http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk>

<http://copac.ac.uk/research?title=In%20Oriente%20Primus&rn+1> - COPAC is the catalogue of national, university and specialist research libraries, which lists a copy **Jonathan's** book, "In Oriente Primus" in the Imperial War Museum Library, which has been saved from closure by public petition.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/expat/expatlife/8798675/My-grandfather-the-expat-codebreaker.html> - an extraordinary story about **Eric Lambert**, a former Royal Marine based in Hong Kong, who was recruited by naval intelligence to decipher Japanese navy signals, and was probably employed by FECB (Far East Combined Bureau), first in Mombasa and later in Ceylon. All intelligence collected by FECB was sent back to Bletchley Park. **Ciss Lambert** (his wife) was recruited as a TWA (Temporary Woman Assistant) for office work to help- with collating data. Also see **Michael Smith's** book, "The Emperor's Codes." <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/11443053/Squadron-Leader-Doug-Nicholls-obituary.html> RAF Far East Pilot

## CONTACTS

### ELIZABETH ADAMSON – SECRETARY of MVG AUSTRALIA

5, Penistone Street, Greenwood 6024, Perth, Western Australia. Tel: 089247 3374 e-mail: [bunneyelizabeth5@gmail.com](mailto:bunneyelizabeth5@gmail.com)

### ANDREW HWANG – SECRETARY of MVG MALAYSIA and SINGAPORE

Jalan Batu Laut, Taman Bukit Seputeh, 58000 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. e-mail: [ayl.hwang@gmail.com](mailto:ayl.hwang@gmail.com)

### JONATHAN MOFFATT – MVG HISTORIAN and ARCHIVIST

49, Combe Drive, Binley Woods, Coventry CV3 2QU. Tel: 02476 545013 e-mail: [jonathanmoffatt@btinternet.com](mailto:jonathanmoffatt@btinternet.com)

### MERILYN HYWEL-JONES – CROSS PLANTING CEREMONY and SERVICE

37, Gowen Avenue, Fulham, London SW6 6RH. Tel: 020 7736 6324

### ROSEMARY FELL – SECRETARY - EDITOR of APA KHABAR – MEMBERSHIP - SUBSCRIPTIONS & DONATIONS.

Millbrook House, Stoney Lane, Axminster, Devon EX13 5EE. Tel: 01297 33045 e-mail: [rosemaryfell11@gmail.com](mailto:rosemaryfell11@gmail.com)